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SERMONS

PREACHED ON

Several Occasions.

By ROGER ALTHAM, D. D.

L A T E

*Archdeacon of Middlesex; Prebendary of St.
Paul's; Rector of St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate;
and Vicar of Latton, in Essex.*

In Two VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



L O N D O N,

Printed; And Sold by G. STRAHAN, over-
against the *Royal-Exchange* in Cornhill.

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BY ROGER ALTHAM, D.D.

President of the
British Museum;



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MDCCLXXII.



SERMONS

ON

Several Occasions.

SERMON XX.

DEUT. xxi. 8, 9.

Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy People Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge; and the blood shall be forgiven them.

So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the Lord.



THESE words contain the form of humiliation appointed by the law of *Moses* to be used over the sacrifice of expiation, for an uncertain murder; as we find by the context: *If one be found slain in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess, lying in the field,*
Vol. II. B and

and it be not known who hath slain him; then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities, which are round about him that is slain: And it shall be that the city which is next unto the slain man, even the elders of that city, shall take an heifer which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn in the yoke. And the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer, unto a rough valley, which is neither ear'd nor sown, and shall strike off the heifer's neck there in the valley. And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near (for them the Lord thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the Lord), and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be try'd: And all the elders of that city that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley: And they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it; Be merciful, O Lord, &c.

This shews us, how heavy the guilt of blood in God's account does lye upon a land, when an uncertain murder, which might possibly have been committed by a stranger, must yet submit the whole city, elders, magistrates, priests, and people, to
such

such a solemn duty of humiliation for the attonement of it.

There is nothing more severely forbid, nor indeed any thing more severely vindicated, either by God's laws, or judgments upon mankind, than is the horrid sin of murder and bloodshedding: 'Tis forbidden *Noah*, and in him to all mankind; for he was then as *Adam* had been before, instead of all the human race which descended from him. It was I say forbidden him, with such a reason as shews us the aggravation of it; as we find it, *Gen. ix. 6. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man.* Which shews us, that the murder of an innocent man, is not only striking at God Almighty's authority in his laws, but also at his very image in the person of man.

The image of God in man does not so much consist (as some would have it) in the external dominion granted him over the rest of the creation, but rather in that internal purity, righteousness, and holiness, with which he was created; and therefore every sin, the heinous one of murder more especially, in the first intentions and designs of it, breaks in upon, first, the image of God in ourselves, deforms there that beauty and order of our wills and understandings, by which we were designed

first to glorify our maker, to become helps and comforts to ourselves and one another, and then unreasonably hurries us forward to the destruction of it in our neighbour.

When therefore God Almighty had solemnly renewed his sacred prohibitions against blood, by a fresh promulgation of his laws against it from mount *Sinai*, and bid us, *Do no Murder* ; to keep up the dreadful apprehension, and heinousness of the guilt of it, thus generally pronounced under the Mosaical Dispensation, he was pleased particularly to adapt the several punishments to the several degrees of it. By the 35th of *Numbers* we find, there were cities of refuge indeed appointed for the manslayer that killeth any person at unawares ; yet even under that casualty, he was looked upon to be so far guilty, that he was confined to that banishment 'till the death of the high-priest ; and if he had any time transgressed the bounds of his refuge, it was lawful for the revenger of blood to kill him. But in the same place it is often and solemnly repeated against the wilful malicious manslayer, that he is a murderer, and that the murderer shall surely be put to death : And to shew us still farther the extent of such a guilt, tells us at the 33d verse, that by the observance of these laws and commands, *Ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are ;*

are ; for blood defileth the land, and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it ; and therefore is it in the instance of the text, where the manslayer cannot be discovered, that the whole community is obliged by sacrifice to atone for the pollution of the land brought upon it, by the shedding of blood.

Thus far therefore does even the *Jerwish* oeconomy shew us the heinousness, and the extent of the guilt of blood. It was not only capital against the person who committed the crime, but left behind it a pollution even upon the very land where it was committed : And we have a severe instance of God's vindicating anger in this case, for the wicked reign of *Manasseh* ; part of whose character was, as we find it *2 Kings xxi. 16. That he shed innocent blood very much, 'till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another.* And therefore tho' his grandson the good *Josiah* did what in him lay to repair the mischiefs, and atone for the wickedness committed in his grandfather's days, by a commendable zeal for restoring the honour of God and of Religion ; by restraining, nay even by destroying the places of false worship, by reducing himself, the priests, and the whole people, to the prescribed rules and duties of the law ; insomuch as *there was*

not holden such a passover as he kept, from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah; but in the 18th year of king Josiah, wherein this passover was holden to the Lord in Jerusalem; as we find it, 2 Kings xxiii, 22, 23. Yet notwithstanding the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations wherewith Manasseh had provoked him withall. And the Lord said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem, which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, my name shall be there.

And such an apprehension as this of the indignation of heaven, against the heinous guilt of blood, ought to make us all most earnestly with king David pray, *Deliver us from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou that art the God of our salvation, and our tongue shall sing of thy righteousness.*

But yet farther, to shew us the heinousness and extent of the guilt of blood, the meeker and more exalted institutions of our Saviour, do yet represent this sin as the most highly accountable: for thus our Saviour repeats the prohibition first given to Noah, Matt. xxvi. 52. *All they that*
take

take the sword shall perish with the sword. And from him St. John, Rev. xiii. 10. *He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword.* And to shew us yet farther the extent of the guilt, that it reaches not only the person of the criminal, but in many cases whole people and nations, and even future generations: When he has upbraided the Jews with the blood and slaughter of the Prophets, to fill up the measure of their fathers he tells them, Matt. xxiii. 34. *He will send them prophets and wise men, whom they shall scourge, and persecute, kill and crucify; that upon them may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom they slew between the temple and the altar:* and concludes his discourse with this asseveration, *Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation.*

To guard us therefore against a sin, which is so heinous in its nature, so direful and extensive in its consequences, our Saviour in his sacred sanctions against it, so far exalts the duties of the precept, as to forbid us not only the actual commission of it, but even the admission of any irregular passion, which may occasionally lead us to it. Thus a causeless anger or

enmity against our brother, becomes under the Christian Law, as accountable as murder, because he who entertains the one, seems only to want an opportunity of committing the other. For thus we find our Saviour's institution runs, *Matt. v. 21. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the Judgment.*

Thus we see the severity of God's denunciation against the guilt of blood, the fierceness of his anger and indignation in revenge of it under the Old Law; the goodness of the Christian institution, which endeavours to prevent even the occasions of it, and yet does not leave us without the terrors of the Lord to persuade us from it.

It ought therefore to be a very astonishing consideration to us, to find still notwithstanding all these threats on the one hand, and advantages on the other, so much of the Devil's malice still reigning in the world; for 'tis *he who was a murderer from the beginning*, John viii. 44. To see so much effusion even of Christian blood, when we are commanded nothing but meekness and patience, submission and self-

self-denial, but more especially if we consider the more particularly heinous guilt of this day, the peculiar stain of this nation, and the lasting dishonour of the *English* Name, both for their loyalty and generosity. What rivers of blood it cost us! what floods of tears it ought to cost us, when we consider with ourselves, that all that outrage was only to destroy ourselves: *English* Liberty, a noble pretence! Reformed Religion, a sacred name! (the defence of which might indeed have justified any thing but an avowed rebellion) were at first pretended to be the causes of our confusions: But faction and hypocrisy when they grow rampant, quickly rid themselves of their disguise; and the judgment in the end shewed us, we fought for liberty, 'till we were brought under the meanest slavery, that of our fellow subjects; and reformed religion 'till we had none left, but were miserably overrun with the wildest enthusiasm.

But that which yet enhances the judgment, and shews us the fierceness of the indignation of Heaven against us, *The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pity, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall be safe.* Our good *Josiah*, whose care was extended to all his people, and shewed him to be, as just a father of our country,
as

as he was a true defender of our faith; whose religion to his maker, and piety to his native country, were both as unsullied as were the brighter virtues of his private life, was not yet able to avert the dreadful judgments of God, against the sins of this people. For to shew us the infatuation of the people, as well as the severity of God's judgment against us, *The people stood up and the rulers took counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed: they cast their heads together with one consent, and were confederate against him.* But how are the mighty fallen! did he fall like good *Josiah* by the hands of enemies? enemies indeed they were by whom he fell, but they were those of his own household. Had he fallen by the hand of some foreign invader, it would have been glorious and honourable for him to have fallen in the defence of his country; and however great the loss might have been to us, yet it could have laid no guilty stain upon the nation. But when a royal and a sovereign prince is persecuted by his subjects, and hunted from place to place like a partridge upon the mountains; when the venerable name of an *English* Parliament, whose greatest honour and ambition it is to succour and defend their Prince, is abused to countenance the designs of factious and seditious persons,

and

and under the pretence of their country's good, a popular fury breaks through all the peace and order of our laws, and will not suffer the best and wisest magistrate to hold the ballance of justice, and keep an even and steady administration of affairs: it looks then as if God Almighty were resolved to give up such a people, to those wild confusions which they themselves had contrived and devised.

But when such a fury has first filled the land with blood and rapine, as it was said of *Manasseh*, from one end to the other, and then cast the guilty blame upon their sovereign, are not content to make him unfortunate only, but a criminal too; and under that pretence, wrest the sword of justice out of those hands, with which both God Almighty and the authority of the law had entrusted it, and turn it against their prince's life, which by all the laws both of God and Man, always was and ought to be accounted sacred; is such an aggravation of bloodshed, as makes it become not only murder, but sacrilege too.

If then the guilt of blood be thus black and heinous in its nature, thus extensive and diffusive in its consequences; if it not only lays a stain, and brings punishment upon the murderer himself, but also defiles the land, and leaves an universal
guilt

guilt upon all the inhabitants of it ; if it cannot be confined to one age or generation only, but like the grievous sin of idolatry, carries both the guilt and punishment to succeeding ages and generations : If, lastly, the blood of this day be so heinous in its kind, so provoking in its circumstances, that we may reasonably expect, the diffusive guilt of it will be extended even to those, who had neither any hand in the contrivance nor perpetration of it : then let us from hence learn,

I. To vindicate the wisdom and piety of our fathers, who have appointed for us this day of humiliation : And then,

II. Let us learn to make the duty of the day answer the design of it.

And, I. *Let us hence learn to vindicate the wisdom and piety of our fathers, who have appointed for us this day of humiliation.*

It has been the wisdom of all religions whatever, amongst their various rites and ceremonies, to have some always appointed for appeasing the wrath of heaven ; the awful apprehensions of divine majesty and power, joined with the consideration of sin and offence against them ; and these again
temper'd

temper'd with farther hopes and acknowledgments, that God was a merciful and placable being, did even upon natural principles lead the very heathens themselves to the institution of propitiatory sacrifices.

As *Satan* answer'd the Lord, *Job* ii. 4. *Skin for skin, and all that a man hath will he give for his life*; so these his votaries sufficiently conscious of their offence, and the power of that majesty they had offended, thought the offering some part of their substance, as a token of their acknowledging his over-ruling power; and by that means a submission to the justice of the judgement inflicted on them, might be the likeliest method of reconciling an angry God to an offending people.

And indeed it so far pleased God Almighty (tho' he was wholly free in the unlimited power of his own institutions, to appoint what he pleased for his own worship), yet I say it so far pleased God Almighty, to follow these reasonable dictates of nature, that we find in all his positive institutions under the *Jewish* oeconomy, he appointed propitiatory sacrifices for their several offences against his laws; and by these natural steps and methods did at last lead them into a right apprehension of that great sacrifice which he himself had once for all provided for the sins of all
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the world. After this, he required no more vain oblations from us, but under this discovery of his will taught us, that when ever we become conscious of any offence that may be sufficient to provoke the divine anger and indignation against us; the first principle of reconciliation with him must be a solemn humiliation of ourselves before him, which must express a just abhorrence of the vileness of our sins whereby we have offended him, a sincere submission of ourselves under his afflicting hand for them; and the honesty of both these, must produce in us resolutions of a better and more just obedience for the future.

And such an humiliation as this will recommend us to his mercy, through the merits and for the sake of that satisfaction which was once offered for us all, by the sacrifice of his son, our only mediator and redeemer: For it is not the price and value of any thing that we can offer, that can be able to purchase for us a reconciliation with an infinite offended justice: The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins, because they were mortal and finite creatures, and could make no equivalent satisfaction for offences done against an infinite and eternal justice.

It was not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, that we were redeemed from our past offences, but with the precious

precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot: 'Twas he himself alone was able to provide himself for us, a sacrifice of infinite price and value, which should be able to atone for the infinite offences of mankind, against an infinite justice.

The sacrifices therefore, whether of the Heathen or *Jewish* institution, had no other value in them, except only as they were types of the great sacrifice of our Saviour, than only as they were humble indications of the sense and submission of the creature to its creator, and by that means were able to become a fit application to his mercy, whose mercy is over all his works.

When therefore the sin for which we are this day to deprecate the wrath of Heaven, is said to be of so black a dye, that in the first collect for this day's service it is called, *The guilt of innocent blood*, the shedding whereof nothing but the blood of Christ can expiate; and do therefore pray, *That it may not be laid to the charge of the people of this land, nor ever required of us or our posterity*; shews us I think sufficiently both the wisdom and piety of our fathers, in appointing for us this solemn day of humiliation, whereby they set before us the heinousness of the Sin: let us see that we are not free from

from the dangerous and extensive consequences of it, for it may be required of us or our posterity; and therefore the necessity we have to submit ourselves to his mercy, is a due sense of and a devout humiliation for it.

Those therefore, who so far despise the wise and pious institutions of our fathers, as to neglect the great and pressing duty of humiliation thus necessarily laid upon us, are not only engaged to God and to themselves, but to their country, and their posterity: and if the consideration of their own advantage cannot engage them, methinks the publick service of these should.

But those wretches who turn the grace of God into wantonness, the great grace of repentance which is this day offer'd us; and instead of a devout and sincere humiliation, revel out the day in impious feastings and profane jollities; and not only in defiance of divine wrath, but also in contempt to that holy Martyr's blood, for which we ought to be this day humbled, sacrifice to their calves in *Dan* and *Bethel*: are such monsters both in religion and humanity, that they ought to be left to the judge and to the magistrate here, 'till they shall be called to account for it at a severer tribunal hereafter. And therefore

fore leaving them, let us return to ourselves, and consider,

II. *How we may make the duty of the day answer the design of it.*

The design of it is, as we find it expressed in the title of the service appointed for this day, to implore the mercy of God, *That neither the guilt of that sacred and innocent blood, nor those other sins by which God was provoked to deliver up both us and our king into the hands of cruel and unreasonable men, may at any time hereafter be visited upon us or our posterity.*

Now this we know may be effected by a sincere humiliation of ourselves before him; the force of that duty, when honestly performed, has a very great and prevailing power with God: he himself for our encouragement has given us examples of it, that even where the judgment has been actually denounced, and the hand of God ready stretched out for the execution of it; yet even then a sincere humiliation has put an immediate stop to the impending vengeance.

So in the case of *Ahab* that wicked king, he said to the prophet, *Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself; because he humbleth himself, I will not bring the evil in his days.*

Thus in the case of *Nineveh* that great and rebellious city, when *Jonah* had pronounced the ruin of it within forty days; the honesty of their repentance prevailed more with God Almighty, than could the importunity of the prophet: For the text tells us, *God repented him of the evil that he said he would do unto them, and he did it not.*

Now these things are written for our learning, and the long-suffering of God we know is intended always, that we may give him an occasion of shewing mercy upon us: If therefore we are possessed with a due sense of the heinousness of the guilt of blood; if we are duly sensible of the particular aggravating circumstances of the blood of this day; if we have right and just apprehensions of the judgments of God; if we have any concern for our selves, for our country, for our posterity: let all these persuade us to think it highly our duty to make a sincere submission of our selves before God Almighty, to prostrate our Souls before him as well as bodies, and deprecate his vengeance and implore his mercy. 'Tis something to suspend the judgment, for even that is an abatement of his fury; and what can once suspend, may, if honestly continued, at last turn his anger into loving kindness.

And

And therefore to evidence the truth and sincerity of this duty, and make it if possible become finally effectual ; let us for the future look carefully to our own ways, and mark and avoid such men as walk disorderly among us ; let us not be ready to run with a multitude to do evil ; let not faction and division imbitter our spirits, and set us at variance with one another. But let a constant and uniform attendance upon our duty in every part of it, bespeak us to be what we ought to be, dutiful creatures to the God that made us, faithful subjects to his Vice-gerents, those ministers he has given us for good ; true to our selves, compassionate to our neighbours, kindly affectioned to one another, provoking one another to nothing else but only to love and to good works : And then the God of Peace will delight to dwell among us.





SERMON XXI.

JOHN VI. 14.

Then the men when they had seen the miracle which Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world.



THE miracle here recorded in this portion of scripture, is that of feeding five thousand men, with five barley loaves and two small fishes: A miracle, like the rest of our blessed Saviour's, as evident as it was useful and beneficial! for he came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And therefore we may observe, there was always that remarkable difference between his miracles and those of the prophets that went before him; that tho' he came to a wicked and adulterous generation, yet he did not bring plagues upon them, such as their obstinacies might have deserved; as *Moses* did upon the *Egyptians*, and the re-

re-

rebellious *Israelites* in the wilderness; nor yet called down for fire from heaven against them as *Elias* did: But as he professed himself to be of another spirit, so did he in practice manifest it, by wonderful works of compassion, kindness, and beneficence to mankind; by curing the sick, restoring the blind, feeding the hungry, and continually going about doing good; doing all the good that a merciful God could bestow upon his creature, or the miseries and infirmities of mankind could receive from their creator: by this sufficiently intimating, that his Gospel, the gracious message he brought into the world, was the Gospel of peace and salvation; by these sensible evidences endeavouring to convince them, that the power he was endowed with, as extraordinary as it might appear, was yet for their edification, and not for their destruction.

And that these external evidences of continual and sensible kindness might at last be the more easily able to bring the carnal man into the consideration of his spiritual benefits, these being as it were so many emblems and representations of so many greater kindnesses which might be expected from becoming followers of him and his doctrine; for this is that improvement, which we find he himself did always make of it; for when he has satisfied their

natural appetites, it was his custom always to improve the opportunity, and therefore bids them, *labour after that meat which perisheth not*, bids them *hunger and thirst after righteousness*, bids them *drink deep of the well of life*, which he drew plentifully for them, *and blessed are they that do so, for they shall thirst no more*: When he cured the lame and blind, to shew them that those infirmities are the dire effects of sin, he bids them, *Go and sin no more*; by this intending, that the restoring the distorted faculties of their bodies should be arguments and intimations to them, how much they ought to endeavour to rectify the depraved and corrupted faculties of their souls.

This then being the great design of our Saviour to recommend himself to them, under the notion of a patron and benefactor, and the spiritual advantage of mankind being the only improvement he constantly made of this kindness; there could be nothing wanting on his part to give it its due effect, but only that all his miracles should have such an uncontested evidence, as might remove from him all the sinister designs of imposture or delusion.

To secure this point, we find all his miracles as convincing as they were astonishing and amazing. To examine only this before us: Here is such an evidence as
causes

causes a conviction through more than one of our senses, to the full satisfaction of our understanding: for the number to be fed was very large, about five thousand people; such a number, that two hundred penny-worth of bread would not have been sufficient to have given every one a little: and yet the provision was very short, but five loaves and two small fishes; so short indeed, that it would have puzzled even the possibility of mathematicks to have divided it into so many parts: and yet we find they did all sit down, they all eat, they were all satisfied: And hunger is a natural passion, which is not easily deluded; the sight, the touch, the taste, the inward cravings of the appetite, are beyond the power of persuasion, and will never own themselves to be satisfied 'till they really are so. The miracle therefore must consist in multiplying the substance of those two creatures bread and fish to that degree, as might be sufficient for the support and sustenance of so many persons; and this we know substance in its own nature is not capable of, for what it gains in magnitude is only in living creatures, and that too by slow degrees of accretion and augmentation: Such an instantaneous increase of it therefore must be something preternatural at least, if not above nature, and therefore either a miracle or imposture.

But that it was no imposture, was evident because it had the same real effects that the same natural quantity could have had; the senses gave their evidence of this, and the appetite which does not use to belye itself, owned the same satisfaction it used to do after a sufficient quantity of nourishment received.

But to convince them beyond all doubt, that this was really a miraculous increase of the substance both of the bread and fish, our Saviour commands his disciples to gather up the broken meat which remained, that nothing might be lost; and when they gathered it together, they filled twelve baskets with the broken meat which remained of the five barley loaves and two fishes: A quantity sufficiently evidencing the miracle, in that the fragments so far exceeded the first store of provision when unbroken. And therefore, when the people saw such a miracle, they said, *Of a truth this is that Prophet which should come into the world*: From whence we may consider,

I. The Strength of that argument which is taken from the joint consideration of Prophecy and Miracle; they were convinced of the miracle, and therefore believed the prediction of a great Prophet to come,

II. We

II. We may hence consider, as the season of the year directs us, the nature and reasons of our Saviour's advent.

And, I. *The strength of that argument which is taken from the joint consideration of Prophecy and Miracle.*

That God Almighty is omniscient and omnipotent, that is, does know all things, and is able to do or compass all he knows, are attributes so peculiarly necessary to a divine nature, that they have not been denied by any sort of men, who have any ways believed the being of a God; because it is impossible to conceive the subsistence of a divine nature without them. Now prophecy and miracle are the manifestations of these two attributes: for prophecy in whatever sense we take it, either as it signifies prediction, or the foretelling of something to come, or as it signifies the immediate preaching and explication of the will of God, in both which senses it is met with in scripture; taken either way, is no more than the revelation of such almighty knowledge, as we could never have had the manifestation of, if it had not been through his gracious condescension, who therefore discovered it to us, because he designed it for our benefit and advantage. And miracle is evidently the manifestation of
of

of his almighty power, because our own conceptions of it are such, as carry it above the power and capacity of nature and common causes: And therefore prophecy and miracle are in the first place plain evidences, that God Almighty can and does upon occasion reveal himself to mankind, and that only for their advantage; for he cannot prophesy any thing that is false, because it is a revelation of his almighty knowledge, and he can do nothing but what is truth; he cannot do any wonderful work for evil or deceit, because miracle is only the manifestation of his almighty power, and that can do nothing but what is good.

Though therefore either of these singly may be sufficient to convince us of the truth and usefulness too of a revelation; for how impious and ungrateful would it be to disbelieve the manifestations of God, who cannot lye, and whose knowledge was therefore discovered to us, that it might be beneficial and advantageous to us! what impudence would it be to refuse a conviction to such testimony of our duty, as is farther manifested to us by miracle, that is by wonderful and unexpected works above nature, when the works of nature themselves are able to shew us our dependence upon God, and consequently our Duty to him! Though therefore, I say, they

they may be either of them singly sufficient of the truth and usefulness too of revelation ; yet since it is the nature of prophecy while unfulfilled to be dark and obscure, and many delusions may be put upon us by the craft of cunning men, nay many seeming wonders, and some real extraordinary works, may be performed by evil spirits : Therefore we must have some rule to try the spirits, whether they be of God ; lest instead of a revelation, we run into delusion, and for faith embrace a weak credulity.

And therefore when any new revelation is proposed to the world, such especially as does in some measure thwart, oppose, and destroy a former, by disannulling its ordinances and institutions, though they are confessedly of divine appointment ; in this case it will be necessary to have the joint consent of prophecy and miracle, to support the person pretending to it, that the credentials of the person may answer the characters of the prophecy, and by that means the truth and justice of God may appear and be made manifest to us in his wonderful mercy. For prophecy being in its nature while unfulfilled, dark and obscure, there is room for all kinds of impostures, and the Devil does not want his cunning craftiness to deceive.

Thus

Thus in the case before us, the *Jews* to whom, (as *St. Paul* says) the oracles of God were given, had many and express prophecies, of some extraordinary person to come: Prophets they had many, who at sundry times, and in divers manners declared to them the will of God; yet they do all of them, even from *Moses* unto *John* the Baptist give testimony unto one who should be greater than them all. This had raised the expectations of that nation, and they really believed, as they had very good reason to do, if their own corrupt imaginations had not disappointed their faith, that there should be raised up for them, a great Deliverer, a Prince, a Saviour.

But their carnal expectation of a temporal Messias, the condition of their country, which was at that time under the *Roman* Government, their eager and solicitous expectation of recovering their lost liberty and dominion, together with the short prospect they yet had into the spiritual world (for life and immortality were not yet brought to light by the gospel); made them ready to follow every pretender to this title, without considering whether his commission was from above, without enquiring whether his credentials did really answer the characteristicks of those prophecies or no; such delusion as
this

this was their following *Thuidas* and *Judas the Gaulonite*, mentioned by *Gammaliel*, Acts v. 36. 37. *But this counsel and this work was not of the Lord, and therefore it came to nought*; and that part of this scattered and miserable people, who are still unbelievers, have been often since deluded by the same pretences.

If therefore the darkness and obscurity of the prophecy must be opened and made clear, by the character of the person who is to fulfil it; that alone may be sufficient to shew us the necessity of some extraordinary power appearing in him, who was to answer and compleat the characters of the foretold Messiah. And therefore tho' our Saviour disappointed their hopes, by disowning any temporal power, and telling them, *His kingdom was not of this world*; yet he did not wholly disown his royal authority, but tells the whole Sanhedrin of the *Jews*, by his Apostle *St. Peter*, Acts v. 31. *That he was raised to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins, in a more glorious kingdom, the kingdom of heaven*, as that signifies, the kingdom of grace in this world; and for this he does not as impostors are used to do, obtrude only his own authority upon them, but tells them, *John v. 31. If I should bear witness of my self, my witness were not true*:

true: And so in the verses following refers them to the witness of *John* the Baptist, and at the 36th verse, tells them, he has still a greater witness than *John*; *For*, says he, *the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me that my Father sent me*: And when some accused him of blasphemy, in that he had called himself the Son of God, he vindicates himself, by provoking them to consider the works he did; *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, then though ye believe not me, believe the works*. And when the Pharisees would not believe him to be that Christ, because they knew from whence he was, supposing him to be of *Galilee*, some of the other *Jews* more ready and willing to believe than they, said, *When that Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than this man hath done?* John vii. 31. And the people in the text, when they saw the miracle, cried out, *This is of a truth that Prophet that should come*.

Thus our Saviour made good his title to the Messiahship, or Mediatorship of the New Testament Covenant; prophecy foretold his coming, and his miracles (his wonderful works of love) confirmed his commission, his being sent from God.

This

This then is the strength of that argument from the joint consideration of prophecy and miracle, that tho' all prophecy rests upon so sure a foundation, that one tittle of it cannot fall to the ground, because 'tis built upon God Almighty's truth; and his veracity is indefectible; yet when a new dispensation is foretold to be delivered to mankind, there the person who is to be concerned in it, to distinguish him from impostors and pretenders to the great work of God, must stand in need of the evidence of some extraordinary power, that the credentials of the person may plainly answer the characters of the prophecy. This was so known a notion among the *Jews*, that we often find them come to the extravagance of a temptation, often asking for a sign; and yet the adversaries as often confessing to the truth of it in our Saviour, *That many wonderful works did shew themselves in him.* And therefore we are to consider,

II. *The nature of his advent, and the reasons of it.*

Tho' our Saviour declined all pretences to temporal power and dominion, and therefore when the *Jews* would have taken him by force and made him a king, he withdrew himself from them; yet he
came

came to be a prince among them, as is declared by the angel at his mysterious conception, as we find it, *Luke 1. xxxi. xxxii. xxxiii.* *Thou shalt bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus; he shall be great, and shall be called, The Son of the most High, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*

Tho' this therefore disappointed the carnal expectation of the *Jews*, yet did it truly answer the characters of that kingdom, as they were foretold by the prophets: for this declaration of the angel is a repetition only of those prophecies given of it by *Daniel* and *Micah*. *Dan. 7. xiii.* *I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the antient of days, and they brought him near before him; and there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. So *Micah 4. vii.* *I will make her that halteth a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation; and**

and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion, from henceforth even for ever.

If therefore his kingdom was to be an everlasting kingdom, it must of necessity be of a different nature from the temporal sovereignties of this world; for the universal history of providence assures us, that none of them can pretend to perpetuity, they all of them have their revolutions. We know the rise and have seen the falls of the greatest of them, but if we consider that vastly extended kingdom of God, who is Lord both of heaven and earth, we may easily perceive that his throne is from everlasting to everlasting, a power which no force can shake, a dominion which shall never be destroyed: *And all this power both heaven and earth (our Saviour tells us) was given to him, Matt. 28. xviii. and to what end the Apostle tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 28. It was to subdue all things to himself, and when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him, that did subdue all things under him, that God may be all in all.*

The Gospel of Christ, which contains the laws of this everlasting kingdom, is said to have brought life and immortality to light; *i. e.* to have manifested to us the

true use of life here, and the true end of it hereafter: If we could therefore for a while set aside the consideration of worldly greatness, pleasure, business, or concern; if we could a while consider the design of our creation, and the dependance of our nature, that we were at first made to serve him, that all we have and all we are depend upon his bounty, and continually sustaining providence: we might then easily discover, that we were at first made only to serve him, and to set forth his glory. So it is still our duty and advantage too, to continue ourselves the subjects of such a prince, whose service is perfect freedom.

But if on the other hand we consider that we have been a rebellious people, and from the first defection of our obedience have still grown worse and worse, inso-much that even the chosen seed, tho' under peculiar providence, had forfeited their title to the priviledges of this kingdom, for both *Jew* as well as *Gentile* were concluded under sin; we might thence discover both the nature of our Saviour's advent, and the reasons of it too: For he came to retrieve our natures, to restore our first hopes, and put us into a possibility of compassing the first designs of our creation.

We

We were at first created chiefly to serve God here, and after the service of this life ended, to receive from him the reward of it in a blessed immortality: This ought to have been our chief our utmost aim, and the other concerns of this life no more than secondary or subservient affairs; not opposing or hindering, but as far as their nature would admit of it, furthering and promoting this. And therefore we find our Saviour threw off all the worldly pursuits whatever, to follow only the interests of this spiritual kingdom: To do this for himself, was easy, because he neither did nor could know sin, for sin was not in him; but to do it for mankind, which was another end or reason of his advent or coming in the flesh, required more than we ourselves could either do or suffer: For 'tis plain we had turned rebels to this spiritual government, we neither could perform the service, nor had any reason to hope for the reward; and therefore in the first place a reconciliation was necessary.

Now reconciliation supposes a satisfaction made on the part of the offending person: but we were not able to offer or make any satisfaction for ourselves; for our nature was sinful, vile, and abominable, and wanted that purity which should be offered to such a God as is of purer eyes

than to behold, much less accept iniquity, for an attonement: And yet the rules even of equitable justice did require, that the same nature which had given the offence, should make the satisfaction. This put us under such a difficulty, that nothing but the contrivance of a wise God, and the infinite condescension of a merciful one too, could deliver us out of: And therefore did he send the son of his love to take our nature upon him, who alone was able to keep it spotless and free from sin, and could by that means offer it a pure and precious and acceptable sacrifice for sin. Thus it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren in all things, sin only excepted; this made it necessary that our great redeemer should be Θεάνθρωπος, God-Man; Man, that he might have such a nature as was able to suffer the punishment of our sins; and God, that he might be able to make those sufferings sufficient, satisfactory, and meritorious.

Thus much the reconciling of the world to God required; and yet reconciliation was not all, for we had so miserably wandered from the ways of God, that we were lost in the confused paths of ignorance and error; the great end of our being, the enjoyment of an immortal life after this, was either so totally obliterated by mankind,

kind, or so miserably confounded, that we find even the *Jews* themselves, who had the greatest share of this divine light preserved amongst them, yet seemed to aspire after no greater than a temporal happiness: And therefore besides reconciliation, his coming had not had its full effect, if it had not likewise guided us back into the way of peace. To this end by a new revelation of our duty, he has again brought life and immortality to light; and therefore tells us, that he himself is the way, the truth and the life, he has not only made a satisfaction for us, but taught us also, how we may apply it so as to depend upon it for salvation; for life began in faith. *i. e.* in a due and humble dependence upon the merits of this great redeemer, carried on and finished by the continual assistance of the grace of his good spirit, through all that glorious train of virtues discovered to us by his gospel, will be sure to meet with such a comfortable welcome as is, *Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord.*

If this then was the nature, these the reasons of our Saviour's advent or coming in the flesh; let this solemn approaching time of Advent put us upon such meditations, as may make us fit to meet the

solemn celebration of his glorious nativity ; let our faith in him be so strong, as to be able to subdue all the attempts of Atheism and Infidelity ; let it appear so lively, as to shine out in an holy life and conversation, to the confusion of all prophaneness and immorality : that so being able to give a good account of our stewardship, we need not be afraid to meet him as his second coming.





S E R M O N XXII.

I PETER, i. 19, 20.

*But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot ;
Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.*



SAINT Peter writing to the Jewish converts of the dispersion thro-
out Pontus, Galatia, Cappado-
sia, Asia, and Bithynia (tho'
both * *Tertullian* and † *St. Cyprian* in-
scribe this epistle to those of Pontus only ;
whether it was so inscribed in the antient
Latin version before *St. Jerom*, or whether
for brevity's sake they quoted only the first
of those nations here mentioned, is a point
at present not very material) ; for the A-

* *Tertul. Scorp.* chap. 12.

† *Cypr. Testim.* lib. 3. chap. 36.

postle, I say, writing to these *Jewish* converts, seems to treat them, as if the notion of a temporal redemption, the restoration of the carnal *Israel*, were still prevailing even amongst them: And therefore he doth magnify the spiritual benefits of our Saviour, he sets before them those real advantages of the heavenly *Canaan*, opposed to those typical benefits of the earthly one. So, verse 4. he tells them, *They were begotten again to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them.* Hence also at the 23d verse, *They were born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever; for all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass: the grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth away.* i. e. Should their temporal happiness have been never so great, never so flourishing, it must at last have failed them, and would have certainly fallen short of satisfaction, to such a being, as was made for life and immortality.

This is therefore what our Saviour brought to light, and what the Apostle tells them in the verse before the text, *was not to be purchased with corruptible things, such as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of*
a

a lamb without blemish, and without spot.

It may be some reason why the *Jews* entertained such gross and carnal notions of the benefits of the *Messias*, because, tho' they were designed for mankind, before the foundation of the world, yet were they manifested to them, only in dark types and figures, taken from the external objects of Sense; infomuch that the law was truly no more, than what the Apostle calls it, * *The shadow of good things to come.*

Wherefore to remove this blindness, which before the coming of the *Messias* in the flesh, was improved into an utter ignorance of the sublimer mysteries and designs of that revelation; we find it was the great design of our Saviour, in all his sermons and parables to the people, to heighten and spiritualize the duties of the law; for the law was not so much to be abrogated, as improved into Christianity. Upon the first appearance of truth, there was nothing else to vanish but the shadows, the darkneses of that truth. Thus St. Paul tells us, † *The Veil was done away in Christ: but as to the Jews, even unto this day when Moses is read, the veil is still upon their hearts.*

To remove this therefore, and convince them that the other was by Christ removed,

* Heb. x. 1. † 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15.

was the hardest task the Apostles had to manage amongst them; and this our Apostle seems here to be labouring for, to bring them through their own notions into a perfect knowledge of the sacrifice of the Messias: Hence have we in the 22d verse of this chapter, the *Παρίσχυς αἱματος Χριστοῦ*, *the sprinkling of the blood of Christ*; in allusion to that ceremony, which was amongst them looked upon, as the very compliment and perfection of the sacrifice: For the sprinkling of the blood upon the altar or towards the propitiatory, was always accounted an offering up the soul of the sacrifice for the soul of the sinner. See *Levit. xvii. 11*. And so again in the words of my text, does he describe unto them the sacrifice of our Saviour by that which was amongst them, the most perfect sacrifice, *A lamb without blemish and without spot*. To go along therefore with our Apostle, I shall endeavour to shew you,

I. That this sacrifice of Christ was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world.

II. That this sacrifice was the only proper, and sufficient sacrifice.

III. That it was manifested in these last times for us. And

And Ist, *That this sacrifice of Christ was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world.*

The truth of this is obvious, being assured to us by so many, so positive, and so plain revelations. Thus St. Peter not only here but in his first inspired sermon to the *Jews*, immediately upon the descent of the holy spirit, tells them, * *They crucified him who was delivered by the determinate council, and fore-knowledge of God*; when by the ὁρισμένη βεβλή, and πρόγνωσις θεῶν, He must certainly mean more than the bare permissive consent of heaven, at the time of the execution of that fact: And therefore we may interpret it by St. Paul, who tells us, *We were saved not according to our works, but according to God's own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, πρὸ χρόνων αἰώνων, before the world began*: Or again by St. John, who calls him, § *The lamb slain from the foundation of the world*; i. e. Designed to be slain from the first designs of the foundation of the world.

And it might be sufficient, that we know this to be the will of God, that God Almighty did actually ordain his only

* Acts ii. 23. † 2 Tim. i. 9. § Rev. xiii. 8.

begotten son, to be a sacrifice: But since *St. Paul* tells us, that we must be *saved* by this eternal purpose of God, that this decree, this ordination of heaven, is the very foundation, and substance of all that salvation we can expect; it may I hope be neither too curious nor too foreign from our present subject, to enquire into the nature and reason of this decree; *i.e.* why God Almighty, who designed a creation all glorious and good, all beauty and innocence, should yet at the same time doom his only begotten son an expiatory sacrifice for sin? At the same time I say, for tho' it was before time began, yet have we no other way of measuring the determinate actions of eternity.

For the better solution of this, we must lay down as a foundation, a twofold consideration of the son of God, even before the creation of all things, which seems to be delivered to us by *St. Paul*, *Colos. i. 15.* where he tells us,

1st, *He is the image of the invisible God.*

2ly, *He is the first born of every creature.*

The first of these (if we will excuse the Apostle from self-contradiction) must necessarily refer to his eternal generation, the second to that procession from the father, whereby he condescended to create all things, and at the same time too determined

terminated himself to become a creature, by taking the created nature upon him.

And that we may not seem to have misrepresented this text of St. *Paul*, you may find almost all the primitive Apologists, in their vindications of the notion of the son of God, to be a perfect comment upon this interpretation. To trouble you at present only with *Athenagoras*, more may be seen in the late Reverend defender of the Nicene Faith : “ * Would you know (says he) what is meant by the Son ? I’ll tell you briefly. He is the *πρῶτον γέννημα τῷ Πατρί, καὶ ὡς γενόμενον*, the first begotten of the Father, not as something that was made ; and then follows the reason of that, because he was always with the Father, *ἀλλ’ ὡς ὑμπαίντων ιδέα καὶ ἐνέργεια εἶναι προελθάν*, but as proceeding to be the actual cause of all things”. Where we may observe, he does not call him the *πρῶτον γέννημα*, the first begotten, as something that was made (for he was not made, but begotten of the Father from all eternity) ; but as he did proceed from the Father (which supposes his existence before in the Father), to be the *ιδέα* and *ἐνέργεια*, not only the ideal but actual cause of all things.

To understand therefore how the Son of God was the *πρῶτον γέννημα*, the first be-

* *Athenag.* page 38. Edit. Oxon.

gotten,

gotten, (which I take to be answerable to St. Paul's *πρωτότοκος* or first-born), we must understand what the Apologist here means by *ἰδέα* and *ἐνέργεια*, which we may easily do, if we do but consider, that *Athenagoras*, as most of those antient Christians did, does closely follow the Platonick school; the only difference between them is, that the Platonist could not well tell where to form his ideal world; whereas the Christian seems to have good reason for the fixing his in the *Λόγος*, or Second Person in the Trinity, because he so often finds it asserted of him in the scripture, *That by him were all things made, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

The Son of God therefore is said to be the *πρῶτον γέννημα*, the first begotten, not as eternally begotten of the Father; but as immediately before the foundation of the world, proceeding from the Father, to be, the ideal world, the Archetype, the first draught or design of this *Εἰσιπάλ* or visible world; and that not only as a bare exemplar, but as the ideal world in energy or operation; himself the draught, the design, himself the workman, forming, framing, creating all things.

Upon these considerations * *Athanasius* also fixes his distinction of the *Μονογενὴς* and

* *Orat. 3. contra Arrian. page 433.*

πρωτότοκος, the only begotten and first born, and upon that foundation builds all his answers to the *Arrian* Sophistry; of which I shall not here enlarge, but only remind you, that this proceſſion, or (as *Athanaſius* calls it) condeſcention of the Son of God to the creation of all things, was that time wherein he was decreed, or fore-ordained to be a ſacrifice. Which will be farther confirmed to us, if we enquire into the reaſon of this decree.

In which enquiry, to avoid the imputation of preſumption, (** For who hath been his counſellor, † Or to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed; § Since it hath now pleaſed him to make manifeſt, what for ages and generations was kept ſecret*) where we may ſafely, go along with Revelation; and endeavour to repreſent unto you, that reaſoning of *St. Paul*, *That this eternal purpoſe of God was therefore made, that we might thereby be ſaved.* For God Almighty deſigning a beautiful creation, and indeed goodneſs and perfection, can produce nothing but what is good and perfect, intends Man to preſide over it, endued with ſuch faculties for the knowledge, ſuch powers and abilities for the performance of his duty, as do plainly ſhew, he intended nothing but the

** Rom. xi. 34. † Iſaiah liii. 1. § Col. i. 26.*

acknowledgment of his own glory, and the advancement of his creatures happiness.

Now to both these ends, it was necessary, nor could it otherwise be agreeable to either his goodness or his justice; to leave Man such a power over his own actions, as that he might determine for himself. And one would think there should have been no great hesitancy in the choice: For where the passions were regular and subject, the understanding bright and clear, the will could not but freely and cheerfully proceed in its elections. Hence we may observe, that the enemy finding it vain to attempt them with any gross provocations, baits the temptation with the pretence of the most specious good, that of acquiring farther knowledge.

Wherefore this liberty necessarily inferring a possibility of Man's failing in his duty, God Almighty, whose omniscience supposes prescience, to whom all the remotest parts of what we call futurity, are immediately present; foreseeing that the subtlety of the adversary, would make use of this advantage, to the overthrow of mankind; and seeing also, that they were not only capable of falling, but would be actually betrayed into the snares of the enemy; To defeat the malice of this *Abaddon*, and out of pure compassion to his creature, (*For he so loved the world as*

to give his only begotten Son) resolves upon this purpose, as most agreeable to the veracity of his attributes.

For not to dispute now, what hath been offered by some as more expedient, at least more convenient, a preventing interposition of divine omnipotence, whereby he might either have quashed the designs of the adversary, or else have necessarily determined man's will to the rejecting of his offers; which would be forcing God Almighty to destroy, what both his justice and goodness had obliged him to, and defacing in us the brightest character of heaven, the liberty of our souls; by this sacrifice his goodness stands undiminished, nay rather increased towards us; and his justice, tho' offended by our sin, receives hereby an adequate satisfaction, and becomes again reconciled.

Thus and upon this account did God Almighty graciously purpose, to *save his creature before the world began*, as St. Paul to Timothy: Thus did he *fore-ordain the precious blood of his own Son, to be our sacrifice*, as St. Peter here expresseth it. And not only so, but no sooner was the world began, and mankind stood in need of this salvation, but he also graciously published this his secret decree, in that prophetic triumph of this day,

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The

* *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.*

The Second thing to be considered is,

II. *That this sacrifice thus fore-ordained, is the only, proper, and sufficient sacrifice.*

By the law of God, death was decreed the punishment of sin; *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* Upon this the Apostle to the *Hebrews* builds that unquestionable truth, *that without blood there is no remission*; sin will require for the expiation of it, the death either of the sinner, or of some equivalent. Now could there have been any other sacrifice sufficient for an expiation or atonement, it would give us a harsh apprehension of the deity, who should needlessly expose the son of his love to all those troubles and afflictions, to all those agonies and tortures he underwent for us. Wherefore we must necessarily conclude, that this alone was the true, proper, and sufficient sacrifice.

Nor indeed could there be any other: For if we consider, that it was an infinite justice which was offended with the sin of man, and therefore upon that account, the sin itself became in some measure infinite:

* *Genesis* iii. 15.

What-

Whatever pretended to reconcile or satisfy for it, must bear some proportion both to the greatness of the crime, and to the dignity and perfection of that being which was offended. For as the fall of man, had spread an universal infection, and by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners; so, to make an adequate satisfaction for this general lapse, it was necessary there should be an universal and uniform obedience performed; by which many were to be made righteous. For besides the equity of requiring obedience to that law, which had been disobeyed, in order to satisfaction and reconciliation; this obedience was farther requisite, to make the sacrifice answerable, and acceptable to the dignity and perfection of that offended being, who is of purer eyes than to behold, much less then to accept iniquity, for an atonement.

This is sufficiently declared by God Almighty, in those typical qualifications required for the perfection of legal sacrifices. For *Lev. xxii. 21, 22. &c.* we find, *That whosoever offereth a sacrifice of peace-offerings* (and such is that certainly, which is to reconcile us again to God) *it shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein, blind, or broken, or maimed, or having a wen, or scurvy, or scabbed, ye shall not offer; nor what is bruised, or crushed, or broken, or cut, nor from a*

stranger's hand shall ye offer, because their corruption is in them, and blemishes be in them, they shall not be accepted for you. From all which it will easily appear, that man being become so much a stranger to God, as to be a stranger even to the perfection of his own nature, was under an utter impossibility of making any satisfaction, and consequently reconciliation for himself.

For whatever the perfection of man's nature was at the first creation of it, 'tis certain that after sin admitted, his knowledge was so impaired, his abilities were so weaken'd, that he was not able to live up to the law of his creation: This rendered him able to perform that uniform obedience required of him by the covenant of works; and the want of that obedience involved his nature in such pollutions, defiled it with such guilty blemishes, that he was so far from being acceptable to God, as that before the world was many generations old, we have the declaration of heaven, *That it repented God to have made man.* Thus impossible was it for a man to redeem his brother, nay indeed to secure himself.

But yet tho' man was not able to redeem himself, there may still seem to be another method of reconciliation, without this severe dispensation of the Son of God.

For

For since God Almighty was pleased not only to accept of the offerings and sacrifices of his creatures, but to stamp them also with the character of his own institution, which is plainly done in the Mosaical Law, why may it not be reasonably supposed, that what was instituted by God himself, to be an expiation for sin, should be sufficient to that end, for which 'twas instituted?

And yet we find, those sacrifices were not of themselves sufficient; there was nothing in which his will was pleased, or could acquiesce, as we find by the frequent declarations of his will by the prophets, those evangelical commentators upon the law, who seem designed to prepare the Law for the reception of the Gospel. Thus *Isaiab*: * *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts, I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats; who hath required this at your hands? Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination to me, &c.* So likewise *Micah*: † *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with*

* *Isaiab* i. 11. † *Micah* vi. 6, 7.

calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oyl? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my Soul?

These might indeed serve for the eucharistical part of religion, for sacrifices of thanksgiving, whereby we acknowledge God Almighty to be the father of his creatures, the author and giver of all blessings to them. But as the Psalmist tells us, *The redemption of souls is precious*; or as the other translation, *It cost more to redeem their souls*; there is wanting in these sacrifices, that dignity which should make them acceptable to God, there is nothing in them that could make them a perfect *Αντίλυτρον*, i. e. Such a price as should be perfectly equivalent to the redemption to be purchased. For in these we offer nothing unto the Lord but what was his before; as the Psalmist, * *I will take no bullock out of thine house, nor he-goat out of thy folds: For all the beasts of the forest are mine, and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills.* Again, † *I thinkest thou that I will eat bulls flesh, and drink the blood of goats?* [Obedience and Praise is what I require of thee,] *and therefore offer unto the Lord thanksgiving, and pay thy*

* Psalm l. 9, 10. † Ib. ver. 13.

vows. So at the last verse, *Whoso offereth me thanks and praise he honoureth me, and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God.* From all which 'tis plain, that the imperfection of these sacrifices did consist in the want of that obedience, which was to make them fit for, and acceptable to that God who was offended by disobedience.

And this reason was fairly intimated by both the Prophets before-mentioned ; but especially by *Jeremy.* * *I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them, in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices ; but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, I will be your God, &c.* For as man by sin was become unable, so were these sacrifices naturally incapable of performing this obedience for him, and therefore could not of themselves become an acceptable atonement for sin. For can we imagine, that the blood of a brute irrational creature should bear any proportion to the deliberate prevarications of a reasonable soul ? Can we believe, that such sins, whose malice must be measured by their voluntary transgression, could be ever blotted out, by

* *Jeremiah* vii. 22, 23.

the death of such a creature as hath neither choice nor will ?

Wherefore upon the whole of this, the Apostle to the *Hebrews* tells us, *When the redeemer cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt-offerings for sin thou hast had no pleasure, then said I, Lo I come to do thy will, O God* *; not only with a body ready for a sacrifice, but with a soul also prepared, to perform that obedience, which must make it an acceptable sacrifice.

For to make up the adequate notion of satisfaction, we must not fix it either in obedience, or passion, singly. For obedience without suffering, had been falling short of the *Αντίλυτρον*, the price to be paid for the redemption: It might have been sufficient for his own, but not for the justification of others. Again, passion without obedience had been suffering for his own, not the disobedience of others. For had he not obeyed, had he ever sinned, he must have suffered for himself, and could no more have made satisfaction for us, than one of us sinful creatures could do for another. Wherefore as *St. Paul* saith of a reasonable service, It must be first *holy*, and then *acceptable*; so in this case

* *Heb. x. 5, 6, 7.*

did our Saviour's obedience give him that innocence, that holiness, which made him a sacrifice fit for a pure God; and then his infinite love, in the voluntary resignation of himself to the undertaking the punishment of our sins, made him an acceptable sacrifice for us, to a gracious creator.

Thus and upon this account was he the one, only, proper, and sufficient sacrifice. For the legal sacrifices, as hath been already proved, wanting that perfection which was to make them acceptable, were of themselves insufficient: For those qualifications and perfections required in them, could be no more than bare types of that innocence and integrity, which in our Saviour was the result of his obedience, and was to God the reason of his acceptance. And therefore the effusion of their blood, could in no wise be in itself valuable; but was accepted only for the sake of that blood of the everlasting lamb, which by this means, became precious.

From hence give me leave to deduce some inferences which may perhaps be of use, towards a better understanding of the christian sacrifice, so much at present disputed among us. As,

1st. That this sacrifice thus fore-ordained is the foundation of all that remission, which was procured by any other, whether by those under the law before, or by these
under

under the Gospel since the offering of this. For as St. *Austin* tells us, * *In illis sacrificiis prænunciabatur filius Dei, pro impiis occidendus; in hoc autem annuntiatur, pro impiis occisus.* Their sacrifices were typical, ours commemorative of the death of Christ.

2. That this was a true expiatory sacrifice, a sin offering, this the Apostle to the *Hebrews* seems industriously to prove, throughout his whole epistle, particularly in the last chapter reasoning from the type he says, † *He therefore suffered without the gate, because the bodies of those beasts whose Blood was brought into the sanctuary by the High priest for sin, were burnt without the camp.* And to compleat the sacrifice he tells us, § *That with this blood, Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us, i. e.* As our high-priest with the blood of his own sacrifice.

3. ‡ *Nor was it needful* (as the Apostle there goes on) *to offer himself often, as the high-priest entered into the holy place every year, with the blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world. But now once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared*

* *Ad Petr. Diac. cap. 19.* § *Heb. ix. 24.*

† *Heb. 13. 11.*

‡ *Ib. 25. 26,*

to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And in the next chapter, he doth positively conclude, *That there is now no more offering for sin.* From whence,

4. We infer, That the Christian sacrifice now, is not an expiatory sacrifice, or sin-offering; but what the Jews call, a peace-offering; or what we properly enough, an eucharistical sacrifice, *i. e.* such an one whereby we return our praise and thanksgiving to God Almighty, for the acceptance of our sin offering, and again enter into covenant with him; it being always accounted, both by the Jews and other nations to be of a federal nature. For God Almighty's justice being satisfied by the acceptation of the sin-offering; which was therefore wholly offered up to him, the blood in the sanctuary, the body without the camp, being made an holocaust, all of it offered up by fire unto the Lord, neither priest nor party offering being admitted to partake of it; he does in this peace-offering, which always followed the sin-offering, vouchsafe to renew his covenant with us again; and as a token of our being reconciled, he does hereby readmit us to communion with him, (which was denied us in the sin-offering, because we had denied it to our selves by our sin) and makes us partakers with him of the same table.

From

From whence may appear, the absurdity of that definition of the Council of *Trent*, wherein they make the sacrifice of their mass a true, proper, and expiatory sacrifice : For were there any truth in that assertion, it would be a better argument for denying to the people the whole sacrament, than they ever yet brought for the taking away one part.

And indeed their supposed transubstantiation, which makes their sacrament to be that real, substantial, and (as they dare venture to say) numerical body and blood, which suffered upon the cross ; from whence, to excuse themselves from the other sacrilege, they are wont to say, That whoever communicates in one kind only, receives both ; is so far from advancing, that it utterly destroys the very nature of communion. For by this means it must become not our peace-offering, but our sin-offering, of which we are forbidden to partake.

Thus therefore is Christ our sacrifice, and thus may we be said to partake of his real instituted body and blood, which are accepted as our peace-offering, for the sake of his real crucified body and blood, which was our expiation.

The third and last thing which we shall briefly consider, is,

III. *That*

III. *That this one, only, proper, and sufficient sacrifice, thus fore-ordained, was manifested in the last times for us.*

Infinite was the love of God to man in this dispensation of his Son, who took not upon him the nature of angels, but took upon him the seed of *Abraham*: For as St. *Jude* tells us, *The angels, which kept not their first estate, he hath reserved in chains unto the day of judgment.* Them hath he left under an irreversible doom, us hath he redeemed, if it be not our own faults, from eternal death, when it was our own fault whereby we had deserved it.

Nay the kindness of this love is still farther advanced towards us, if we do but consider, that tho' the benefits of the passion were universally designed for all mankind, yet were they wholly concealed from the heathen world: And tho' the Jews had the keeping of the oracles, yet were they even to them a mystery, never to be manifested, 'till the last times for us.

Let this Love therefore (as St. *Paul* saith) constrain us; and since we cannot now plead, either the ignorance of the Heathen, or the imperfection of the Jewish revelation, for we have the clear light of Gospel set before us, a full revelation
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of God's will preach'd unto us; let us learn obedience by him that suffered, let us learn to do the will of God for his sake, who for ours was *obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross*. Again,

2. If this sacrifice, thus fore-ordained, was manifested in these last times for us, what obligations ought the kindness to lay upon us, to accept the revelation of it, with the most humble and sincere gratitude imaginable! How ought it to raise in us an holy zeal and indignation against the vain traditions of those men, not to call them the suggestions of a worse being, which would break in upon the revelation of this sacred truth, and would blunder and confound us in the apprehension of that when revealed, which without a revelation we could never possibly have known! Such especially are the superstition of one sort, and the profaneness of another, who yet would both be thought Christians, tho' they do in effect deny the Lord that bought them.

For when the Council of *Trent* in their third Canon of the sacrifice of the mass, make that sacrifice not only truly propitiatory, but also sufficient for both the living and the dead, as a full satisfaction for all their sins, and all the punishments due to them, and answerable for all the other necessities of lost mankind to salvation;

tion; when they build a merit upon their own good works, and other trivial satisfactions of their own devising, and recommend that merit to the mediation of others besides our Saviour, not to say, too often neglecting his; How can he, who is a jealous God, look otherwise upon this superstition, but as highly derogatory to the wisdom of his councils, as they are now made manifest to us, and a despite done to, not only the merits, but the mediation also of his own son? 'Tis true, they make the sacrifice of our Saviour offered upon the cross the foundation of all this; but then upon this foundation they build such a superstructure, that nothing appears to their deluded followers, save only the beauty of that, whilst the foundation lies buried in the ground.

But there is another sort of men, who whilst they pretend to be very zealous for pulling down this superstitious *Babel*, take from us the very corner stone, denying the sufficiency and satisfaction even of our Saviour's sacrifice. These are such who in their own histories do love to style themselves Unitarians; by which title they would have us understand, that they are bold enough to deny our Saviour even his divinity, and rob us of that which alone could make his sacrifice an adequate satisfaction for our sins; for had not he who
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was the Son of God suffered, the satisfaction offered by the Son of Man could never have been of an infinite value. But the naming only this profaneness is, I hope, sufficient to make it be abhorred amongst all Christians, which dwindles all the mighty benefits of our great divine Redeemer into no more than the exemplary sufferings of an innocent man.

When therefore our Church teaches us in her 2d article, that the two whole and perfect natures, *i. e.* the Godhead and Manhood, were joyned together in one person, whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man, who truly suffered to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men: And in her 31st article, That this offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual, and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone: Wherefore the sacrifices of masses, in the which it was commonly said, that the priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits. When I say this faith in a crucified Saviour, who therefore suffered that he might become a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, propitiation and satisfaction, for all

all the sins of all mankind is thus manifested for us by God himself. When by the gracious goodness of God, and the great piety and prudence of our forefathers in the faith; the same faith has descended to us as pure and undefiled as it was first delivered to the saints; and for our further encouragement, when those who by God's appointment are nursing fathers and nursing mothers to his Church, become as bright examples as they are great defenders of this faith: Let us so learn to fear God for these and all his mercies, that infinite one of this day especially, (for with him is mercy, therefore shall he be feared) as to think it always our bounden duty, to make our constant prayer to him, that we may be still able to hold the unity of this faith in the bond of peace.





SERMON XXIII.

MATT. VI. 17, 18.

But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face:

That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.



IF devotion be a fixt and constant intention of the will to perform all those duties and observances, which religion binds us to, amongst all its noble train of attendants, there is not any one duty more effectually subservient to it than that we are this day commanded to perform. For the duty of humiliation, whether we consider it as it respects God, or as it has a nearer relation to our own souls, is, in the effects of it, so full of divine comfort, that however the acts of it may seem afflictive or troublesome, yet may we reasonably expect the

the issue of it to be Joy and Peace in the Lord. For in respect of God Almighty, there is not any one single duty of religion can produce such extraordinary instances of its prevailing power with him as this can. The promise in the text, that a true fast shall be openly rewarded, may gain an easy admission amongst christians, when we consider (not to instance any further), that a wicked *Nineve* and an *Abab* more wicked than the whole city, tho' they had sinn'd in all appearance beyond mercy, could yet by this our duty of humiliation, be able to wrest divine vengeance out of God's hands, when he seem'd irrevocably to have pronounc'd it against them.

In relation to our own souls, when we consider, that the main end of christianity was to heighten and improve our nature (as far as flesh and blood is capable) to that perfection we hope more perfectly to enjoy in another state, when even our bodies shall arise spiritual bodies; there is no duty can better recommend it self than this of humiliation, which is represented to us as that which subdues, kills, crucifies, those rebel, slavish lusts and corruptions, which are the only hindrances to us in our endeavours after that perfection.

Since therefore these instances seem purposely recorded by God Almighty for our encouragement to this duty, and these ad-

vantages may be sensibly experimented, by any devout christian in the exercise of it, I shall endeavour upon this occasion in general to set forth to you,

I. The necessity of this duty, and

II. The advantages of it.

I. In discoursing the first of these, 'tis obvious to take notice of a two-fold necessity, the one arising from the nature of this duty, which is always obliging, and binds us to the performance of it indefinitely at some time or other; the second arising from the commands of our superiors, which obliges us to the performance of it at some certain times, and in some certain manner. The first of these is the foundation of the other, and therefore I chuse rather to insist upon the proof of it, because there are some who not only scruple but utterly reject it, and think if they can be free from the commission of hypocrisy, there is no fault in the omission of the duty. 'Tis true indeed, that the present precept of our Saviour is not a positive institution of the duty it self, but only a directive precept for the manner of its performance. So likewise the command of the Old Testament seems rather a prescription for the time of its exercise, than an absolute injunction of the duty it self.

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But yet when this annexes so severe penalties to the neglect of it, and that of our Saviour promises so great a reward to the performance, he must think harshly of the one law-giver, and meanly of the other, who will not allow them in these laws to suppose an antecedent necessity arising from the duty it self; which I shall endeavour to prove, by shewing,

1. That the directions for this duty stand upon the same bottom with others, which are universally own'd to have an antecedent necessity.

2. By shewing how that necessity arises from the nature of the duty it self.

If we consider the general design of our Saviour's Sermon upon the Mount, we shall find it chiefly to intend these two things; either the explication of such positive laws, whose true importance had been mistaken by the *Jew*, and advancing the intent of them to suit exalted principles as were beyond the capacity of the carnal *Israel*, and therefore were reserv'd for that sublimer oeconomy the mystical *Israel*; the state of christianity. And these are always usher'd in by this Preface, *It was said by them of old time, But I say unto you*; may be call'd our Saviour's improvement of the doctrinal part of the law: or else where the duty is equally own'd under both states, correcting only those errors in practice,

tise, which the mistaken devotion or superstition rather of the *Jew* had brought upon it: And this seems, to be the design of this 6th chapter, which may be call'd the second part of that Sermon, or the practical part of the law notify'd; for leaving out the explanatory Preface, which had been the method of the former chapter, he proceeds there immediately to the direction of the practice, and teaches us in what manner we ought to exercise the necessary duty, first of Alms-giving, 2dly of Prayer and Fasting. If therefore the two first be universally own'd to be necessary duties in themselves, I cannot see how we can reasonably deny the same necessity to the third.

And that they are so, 'tis too plain to need a proof from the universal practice of the world *Gentile*, as well as *Jew*.

For what reasonable creature is there who can compare his own indigence with the all-sufficiency of an Almighty Being, but must necessarily become a suppliant to it! What compassionate creature is there (and that's a principle interwoven with the very frame of Humanity) who can consider his own indigence reliev'd by an Almighty Bounty, and not think himself at the same time necessarily oblig'd, according to his proportion, to derive the same Bounty upon the indigence of another!

ther! The obligation therefore of these two duties is as binding upon us, as is the very law of our Being, and we can no more refuse compliance with them, when we consider what we are, than we can refuse acknowledging our selves to be.

Wherefore our Saviour, who at first created, and had at that time himself taken upon him human nature, and therefore could not be supposed ignorant of it, knowing that the principle must necessarily be own'd, and that all our defects in practice, proceeded not so much from our ignorance, as from the imperfection of our nature; does not apply himself to instruct us, as in other positive revealed laws, in the necessity of the duty, but upon the supposal of that, directs us in the exercise of these duties, by proper methods, to attain the proper end of them.

When therefore we see the present duty of Fasting, in the same continu'd discourse, immediately subjoin'd to these by our Saviour himself, and by him recommended to us in the same method and manner that the others are; I cannot see how we can avoid owning, that the necessary obligation of this duty must stand upon the same bottom with the others, and that it must necessarily be suppos'd antecedent to our Saviour's directions concerning the practise of it.

Wherefore to confirm this reasoning, I shall endeavour to shew,

2dly, How this antecedent necessity arises from the very nature of the duty. As from a due sense of human indigence, join'd with the consideration of God's bounty and all-sufficiency, do necessarily result the duties of alms-giving and prayer; so also, from a due sense of our own sins and imperfections, join'd with the consideration of God's justice and mercy, does necessarily arise the duty of humiliation: For where there can be no justification admitted, as in the case of imperfection and Almighty justice, there is nothing can intercede to save the sinner, but only submission on the one hand, and mercy on the other. By this method did *Job* acknowledge God's justice; *How shall man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand*, Job. ix. 2, 3. and at the 15th, *Though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, but I would make supplication to my judge*: And though he did stiffly maintain his integrity and uprightness against his uncharitable friends, who charg'd him with hypocrisy; yet when at last he came to plead with God, his only answer was, *I abhor my self, and repent in dust and ashes*.

Nay, so absolutely necessary is the duty of humiliation, upon this one joint consideration

deration of God's justice and our sin, that it is the groundwork of that reconciliation, which our Saviour wrought for us; the very foundation of his mediatorial kingdom: For he was forc'd to make submission for us, before he could be admitted our mediator; he humbled himself with fasting, weeping and praying; he humbled himself with all the austerities of a severe life; he humbled himself for us miserable sinners unto death, nay, even unto the death of the cross.

If then the doctrine of humiliation, in its general principle, as it imports a submission to God's justice, and by that means an application to his mercy, was thus necessary to the great work of an universal reconciliation between sinful mankind, and an offended just God; how much more must it, and all the acts of it, be every single man's concern in the application of that universal redemption to himself, since we are commanded to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

Nor is this duty necessary only as a submission to God's justice, and by that means an application to his mercy, but also as it is a guard upon our selves. For God having created Man, and left him in the hand of his own counsels, for want of an easy self-denial, which was given him for his guard, and which his reason, had it been consulted,

consulted, would have readily prompted to him; he admitted that sin, whose poyson soon diffused it self, and threw the whole order and harmony of his frame into disorder and confusion: those parts which were created for the subordinate ministry and service of the soul, grew unruly and rebellious, his passions overbore his reason, and, poor man! was almost without understanding; little better than the beasts that perish. He was indeed exactly in that condition St. *Paul* elegantly describes in the 7th chapter of his Epistle to the *Romans*, *The good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.* This general defection from God and goodness, this universal disorder of our nature, being aton'd for by our Saviour's humiliation of himself, we were again admitted to a better hope, as the Apostle calls it, the end of our creation: The living in obedience to our Maker's laws in this life, and the receiving the reward of that obedience in another, are still propos'd to us as attainable; and that by a more gracious covenant: But yet the conditions of it must be fulfill'd by us.

If then we consider, that the breach of our first covenant was perfectly the neglect of that guard, which ought to have secur'd our soul against the motions of the lower faculties, which could then only solicit,

licit, but do now command, we cannot certainly but think it highly necessary to redouble our care now, to set a strict watch upon our selves, to suspect every motion of the flesh, and to reject even many innocent gratifications, rather than admit one which may again trepan us into the breach of our covenant. This is the foundation of that duty which we call mortification, which is grossly mistaken by those who think it a penance for past sins, for that must be inflicted by God alone, who is our only judge; but yet I think we may well account it the best recommendation we have, through the merits of Christ to God's mercy for sins past; and the best guard we can have upon our selves against the commission of them for the future: and therefore I think may be reckon'd amongst those duties that are highly necessary. For self-denial is not only the most reasonable, but also the most prudent rule we can walk by.

The boundaries of good and evil lie very near, and he that allows himself in all liberty he thinks innocent, walks upon a dangerous precipice, where the least slip may throw him into irrecoverable ruin. He that advances to the utmost limits of what is lawful, ought to consider, that the next step carries him beyond his line; and if he duly weighs the hazard of
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the combat, as *St. Paul* always describes it, between the Flesh and the Spirit, he will find the enemy so powerful, so cunning, that a little prudence will easily direct him to a cautious and wary retreat, as his only guard and security, in this posture of defence. Whilst he does not suffer the adversary to approach too near him, he may easily countermine the *φρόνημα σαρκός*, the subtle and powerful insinuations of the flesh, with its lusts and affections: He will be free from all that hurry and disturbance of mind, which growing passions are apt to throw men into; and being by this calmness render'd capable of judging things distinctly, he may at that distance discover that to be a vice, which a nearer approach might have put upon him under other colours. This was *St. Paul's* method, and this the very reason of his using it, as he himself tells us, *1 Cor. ix. 27. I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.* He might do the work of an Apostle, he might preach powerfully enough for the promoting the salvation of others, yet still did he think this duty necessary to him for his own security.

After this example, I need not, I hope, any further press the necessity of this duty; for if *St. Paul*, who was so extraordinarily

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rily endowed with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, did yet think this duty necessary for him, we, who can make no pretences to an extraordinary assistance, should be guilty of too great a presumption, should we not conclude it more necessary for us. Supposing therefore the necessity, let us consider,

II. *The advantages of it.*

For setting forth the bare necessity of a duty, is declaring only the burden, and we are all apt, with *St. Paul's Jew*, to ask, what profit, what advantage is there? More especially being encouraged by the assured promise of our law-giver himself, that his yoke is easy, and his burden light. Since therefore the present duty seems to carry with it an appearance of the greatest hardship, the more effectually to recommend it to us, we must consider it under such advantages as will more than countervail the seeming severity of it. And the same considerations, which shewed us the necessity of it, will, when further insisted on, shew us the advantages of it too: For it is advantageous to us,

1. As the best recommendation we can have to God's mercy, for the pardon of our sins past.

2. As

2. As the best guard we can have upon our selves against the commission of future sins.

1. And first let us consider the advantage of it, as it best recommends us to the mercy of God, for the pardon of our sins past.

Some of the severe Ascetics of old, being highly sensible of the necessity of this duty, have spoken so magnificently of it, and in some instances have carried the exercise of it, so far beyond the point of necessity, I might almost say decency, that their writings and examples seem to have given occasion to *that* superstition of the darker monkish ages; which affixing merit to the afflictive part of this duty, has quite blunder'd and confounded the true account of the advantage of it; for it is not the afflictive but the submissive part of this duty, which must effectually recommend us to God's mercy: For when afflictions have moulded our souls into that temper, that they can cheerfully resign themselves to the will of God, and with an humble sincerity submit themselves wholly to his disposal; then is it that his justice takes compassion on us; and by this means do truth and mercy kiss each other: For if by afflicting our selves, we think to make our selves our own judges, and advance voluntary afflictions as adequate penalties to

to our demerits, we not only affront the infinity of God's justice, but despise also those merits of our Saviour, which when the sinful creature was incapable of doing, came in to make a satisfaction for us.

The afflictive part therefore of this duty, being design'd only for the making our submission sincere and perfect; for as St. Paul tells his *Corinthians*, 2 Epist. ch. x. 3; 4, 5. *Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth it self against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.* This, I say, being the design'd end of that part of the duty, shews us not only how preposterous it is, instead of a broken and contrite heart, to set up the proud and haughty pretences of a merit; but also how very vain and foolish that superstition is which, upon this mistake, has crept into the exercise of this duty.

The extravagance of it, which has run sometimes into downright unnatural barbarity and cruelty, can never be acceptable to that God, who has declar'd that his mercy is over all his works. We are commanded indeed to subdue, to kill, to crucify;

crucify ; but 'tis our lusts, not our selves. And he that will not permit us the exercise of any cruelty towards others, can never be pleased with our being guilty of it towards our selves.

They were the priests of *Baal*, who whipt and cut themselves with knives and lancets till the blood gush'd forth, and all to no purpose ; whilst the humble Prophet advis'd the people only to turn to the true God, and submit themselves to him ; and in so doing was heard, and prevail'd against them.

And if we look into the several instances of God Almighty's gracious condescensions in cases of this nature, we shall find them all built, not upon the severity of the affliction, but upon the sincerity of the submission. Thus in the case of *Ahab*, whose character seems to be compleat wickedness, who *sold himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, who did very abominably in following of idols, according to all things as did the Amorites*; when the terrible denunciation of God's judgments struck him, and he became truly sensible of his folly and danger too, he *rent his cloths, and put sackcloth upon his flesh and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly*: All evident tokens of a sincere and hearty submission and turning unto God. And therefore upon this, *came the word*
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of the Lord unto Elijah the Tishbite, saying, seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me! because he humbleth himself before me I will not bring the evil in his days.

Thus likewise in the case of the *Ninevites*, when *Jonah* had pronounc'd the utter overthrow of the city within forty days, 'tis said of them, *They believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them even to the least of them; and the king's edict was, That man and beast should be cover'd with sackcloth, that they should cry mightily unto the Lord, that they should turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that was in their hands; and God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil that he had said he would do unto them, and he did it not.* Nay, though *Jonah* himself was very solicitous with God Almighty for the accomplishing the Judgment denounc'd; jealous, I suppose, lest some imputation should fall upon his veracity, and he should be accounted a lying prophet; yet was this sincere humiliation of the *Ninevites* more prevailing with God, than the importunity of the prophet. And the prophet's angry expostulation with God in the last chapter gives us the reason of all this. *I pray thee O Lord, was not this*

my saying while I was yet in my country, therefore I fled, for I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

If then the true advantage of this duty, as it respects God, be rightly laid, in the submissive part of it, we have no more to consider, but only what that submission is, and upon what grounds it becomes acceptable to God. The state of Man, fallen under sin, is generally represented, throughout the whole scriptures, under the character of rebellion, which, in its notion, implies not only a defection from our duty, but an opposition too to that power, to which we ought to have submitted: By this means we become guilty, not only of the omission of our duty, but of grievous commissions also. This guilt makes us become obnoxious to justice, which, when we find to be omnipotent, we are easily made sensible that we can no more withstand than we can avoid it.

Under this condition, an easy consideration will represent to us, the grossness of our past errors, and the greatness of the danger we are led into by them. If then there be any ingenuity on the one side, any sense of danger, on the other, either one or both of these principles, must lead us into such an afflictive sorrow for our past offences, as will
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throw us low at the feet of mercy; they will make us with the returning prodigal say, *Father I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; but yet give me leave to be thy servant still, though one of the meanest of thy hired servants.* And if this sorrow be real and sincere, it will naturally lead us into such an hearty resolution, as shall give us a true aversion to the evil past, and produce in us a real conversion unto God. It will convince us, that 'tis absolutely necessary we should submit our selves to that power, which we find we cannot with security, nay with impunity affront.

This therefore is that submission which the duty of humiliation ought to bring us to, and these the means by which it must be compassed; and if we can discover any real grounds of its being acceptable to God, we shall be sufficiently convinc'd of the advantage of the duty in this particular. Now the submission it self, as barely consider'd in its own nature, can never be a real ground for it, for certainly 'tis but a weak pretence to a favourable acceptance with God Almighty, because we are sinners, and confess our selves to be so, which is the whole importance of submission; were we to deal with justice only, the frankness of a confession, would be so far from acquit-

ting, that it would rather enhance our guilt, and hasten our condemnation: *But with the Lord there is mercy, therefore shall he be feared.* Justice is a dread and terror to us, but mercy does straitway turn it into an awful and reverential fear. For we cannot consider the nature of the Deity, under that relative notion of a Creator, without considering at the same time that comfortable tie between them, his kindnesses to his creature.

When therefore we can plead any thing in bar to justice, a sincere submission must naturally become the most powerful application to his mercy. We must consider therefore, though we have sinn'd, *we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins.* The universal satisfaction of that Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, is our only guard against Almighty Justice; and the continual intercession of that advocate, recommends our sincere submission to God's mercy.

By this means therefore does the submissive part of the duty of humiliation become acceptable to God Almighty, and we have great reason to think the duty advantageous to us, when we find this light affliction for a season, is thus able to procure for us, an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

From

From hence therefore may appear how vain the pretence of any merit or satisfaction from the afflictive part of this duty is ; for 'tis upon this foundation only, that we can make any claim or title to the benefits of those promises, which for our better security and greater encouragement God Almighty has bountifully made us in his reveal'd word ; as may appear not only from this account of the nature of the thing, but also from the promises themselves. We find in the 18th chapter of the prophet *Ezek.* and the same doctrine is pathetically repeated at the 33d chapter of that prophesy, a positive and determinate sentence, *the soul that sinneth it shall die* : And yet a promise immediately subjoin'd to the submissive returning sinner, *But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.* And for our greater encouragement, at the 26th verse, he tells us, *When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them ; for his iniquity that he hath done, he shall die.* But again, *When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he*

shall surely live, he shall not die. And his reason is, *For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn your selves, and live ye.*

This was the universal voice of all the prophets, *Turn ye, turn ye, from the evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel!* It was indeed, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, the only doctrine of that great forerunner of our Saviour, *repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand:* And that kingdom when it was come, the Gospel of Christ made this almost its only doctrine, *repent and believe, and ye shall be saved.* And when some seem'd to tax the Lord with slackness in relation to his promises upon some other Accounts, St. Peter gives in this as the reason for it; *The Lord is not slack concerning his promises, (as some men count slackness) but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

Now since these promises are built upon our conversion to God, and submission to his ways, and therefore give us upon our performance a kind of covenant title to the benefits of them; they do plainly set forth to us, not only the advantages of the duty of humiliation, as it best recommends us to the mercy of God for the pardon of our sins past, but also that the submissive part
only

only is able to procure for us that reconciliation. The second advantage of this duty is,

2. That it is the best guard we can have upon our selves against the commission of future sins, and therefore the best way to secure us against future judgments.

That which if rightly manag'd, is able to make a reconciliation between God and man, will certainly upon the same account be able to reconcile us to our selves: The enmity between the flesh and the spirit cannot be suppos'd greater than that which sin makes between God and the soul. The only difference is, that the enemy to be subdued is in one case, rational and considerative, and therefore may be prevail'd upon to be serviceable to his own reduction: In the other we have to deal with the brutish, the animal part of Man only, which is wholly deaf to the voice of reason, and therefore where there is no room for the gentler methods of persuasion, must be curb'd and kept under with the roughness of authority.

Here therefore is it that the afflictive part of this duty will be highly serviceable to us. For if we will be Christians, we must crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts, as *St. Paul* tells us in an elegant and expressive metaphor; for the punishment of crucifixion was by the antient *Romans* appropriated to their slaves, and then chiefly

when they were rebellious or disobedient; which is the very case of that struggle between the flesh and the spirit. Thus St. *James* tells us, chap. iv. 1. *From whence come wars and fightings amongst you? come they not hence, even from your lusts that war in your members?* Now this war is a downright rebellion: for as the whole creation of this world was submitted to the authority of the only rational creature Man, so likewise the government of that lesser world, himself, was committed to the power of that faculty, which alone is capable of rule and government, as being that only which can judge and determine between convenient and inconvenient, between good and evil; the other faculties of man therefore must by the end of their creation be design'd for the subordinate ministry and service of this, unless we will with the impious *Manichee* believe two distinct and contrary principles, one of evil the other of good, and by that means do what the devil's ambition could not, set him equal with God.

When therefore we find the seat of empire chang'd, and sin reigning in our mortal body, when the law of the members has so successfully manag'd war against the law of the mind, as to bring it into captivity to the law of sin, we may then, if we can reflect, easily discover a great disorder
in

in our nature, the mind may will still, but captives must obey their masters; and this, as most rebellions do when prosperous, becomes an unsupportable tyranny. Under this condition we have no other method left to retrieve our selves by, but only as 'tis story'd of some of old, to march against our usurping slaves with whips, and if no assaults can force them, if no terms of capitulation will oblige them to surrender, there is no other way left but to starve the enemy. And this indeed is the only end and design, of those severer acts of mortification, to keep under that body of sin which is thus apt to be rebellious, and bring it into subjection, for if *Jeshurun wax fat he will kick, if he be covered with fatness he will forsake the God that made him, and lightly esteem the rock of his salvation,* Deut. xxxii. 15. and therefore as we find it verse 24. *He must be burnt with hunger.*

The duty of fasting has been call'd by some the life of angels; and the reason I suppose is because it puts us upon those sublime contemplations, which are the continual employment of those glorious beings, and does in some measure even spiritualize the body: For it makes it become, what it ought to be, a just assistant to the soul; and when both of them move in that regular and uniform order which was design'd them by their creator, they raise
such

such a beauteous fabrick, as is indeed fit to be the temple of the Holy Ghost. And when we are provided of such a guest, we may reasonably think our selves secure against all the assaults of sin.

To conclude then : If we are convinc'd of the necessity of this duty, if we are perswaded of the advantages of it, we have no more to do but to take our Saviour's directions for the exercise of it. *But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face: That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.* In which directive precept we may observe, that whether in private or publick fasts, as there may be particular necessities for both, and our Saviour by that indefinite note of time, seems to leave the prescription of them to be determined by the prudence of every constitution for it self : Whenever therefore it is that we must practise this duty, our Saviour commands us to pursue the true end of it, if we expect the reward of it. For he who with the hypocritical *Pharisee* lays out all his religion to purchase only the esteem of men, shall indeed have his reward, but it shall be the reward not of his fasting but his hypocrisy. For such an one instead of humbling himself before God, which ought to be the true end and design

sign of the duty, exalts himself against him, and such an one will God abase.

On the other hand, the extravagant severities of others, which run them into vanity at least, if not superstition, will be answered with that of the prophet *Isaiah*, *who hath required this at your hands?* For I cannot imagine that an humble devotion does necessarily require us to destroy our nature, or that it cannot be really compassed without such severities as seem to ridicule rather than promote religion. Such were the mortifications recorded of the old *Egyptian* monks, such that prodigious whimsey of the famous *Simeon Stylites*. *St. Paul* was in fastings often, in watchings often, and yet the exercise of those duties was no hindrance to a very active life.

Let us therefore from our Saviour's command, and his example, learn so to perform this and all other religious duties, that we may be always ready to offer up both our Soul and body a living and acceptable sacrifice to God.





SERMON XXIV.

I. COR. iv. 1.

Let a Man so account of us, as of the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God.



THE body of this first epistle to the *Corinthians* is made up of Reprehension and Instruction; for many, and some grievous were the faults of the *Corinthians* at this time, and therefore they stood in need of both: Their admission of one notoriously incestuous to an open and free communion, their general want of charity, sufficiently manifested by their quarrels with, and impleading of one another, and that before heathen judges; their slovenly and unchristian behaviour in some of the greatest duties of christianity, even in the celebration of the holy mysteries; their great defect of faith in one of the most considerable articles of our religion the resurrection, might apologize for the warmth of the Apostle's zeal, and vindicate

dicare a sharper reproof than he here gives them. But the chiefest of their Faults, and those which seem to have been the occasion of the rest, were their contentions and divisions; and my reason for it is, because they are first and longest insisted upon by the Apostle. So chap. i. 11. *It hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.* And this subject entertains the Apostle till the end of the 4th chapter: This 4th chapter being therefore conclusive of this subject, must certainly, according to the usual method of the Apostle, contain a closer application of such arguments as the Apostle thought most necessary for the curing of that inveterate disease of schism and contention; wherefore at the 1st verse we find him asserting the dignity of the Pastoral Office, *Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God:* In the 2d, 3d, and 4th he sets forth that eminent perfection which ought to be conspicuous in those who bear that sacred character, *viz. That they be so far from being liable to be blamed by others, that they ought not to be conscious even of the least blame to themselves;* but withal insinuates, *that though they should be in some measure faulty, for poor and weak mortality can no more attain an infallibility in*
practice

practice than it can in opinion, *yet are they the Lords servants, and he that judgeth is the Lord.* Wherefore at the 5th verse from these premises he infers the duty of the people, *Therefore judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, &c. i. e.* The dignity of the Pastoral Office is not to be submitted to your censures, you must wait the Lord's time, and when he comes there will be such a tribunal set up as will give equal justice to all parties. In the mean time you must be content to do your own duties in your own places and Stations; nor must your prejudices, taken up against the Pastors, upon what occasion soever, unless the compliance would be really sinful on your own part, drive you on to censures, reproaches, animosities, contentions or divisions.

This is a short account of the Apostle's reasoning for unanimity and agreement, which will be plainer and easier if we give you an account of the rise and occasion of this schism. And then because the whole argument is built upon this maxim, which asserts the dignity of the Pastoral Office, we shall confine our selves to the consideration of that only, where it will be necessary to take in those perfections which are requir'd of us for the support of that dignity. But first,

To trace exactly the original occasion of this schism, we must look back into the very infancy of the Church, and there distinguish the time of its plantation from the time of its establishment, for the church (especially in that notion of it which relates to schism) being a body or society of people united together by common bonds and rules for the service of God, there must necessarily be first a conversion of people to the state of christianity, before there could be an establishment of any christian society: Now for the state of conversion, it was necessary that there should be some extraordinary helps and assistances; for christian religion being neither recommended by any worldly advantage, nor proposing any thing of that nature as to this life, but only greater benefits in the life to come, to those that would embrace it; it was requisite there should be a good assurance given, not only of the truth but certainty of these things by some miraculous effects, which might at once both astonish and convince any unprejudic'd spectator, that the divine omnipotence it self was really engag'd for this way of worship.

Thus the first remarkable conversion that we meet with to the Truth of Christ, was occasion'd by that miraculous Gift of tongues, which was given to the Apostles on the day of pentecost; on which day and upon

on which occasion, we are told, *Acts* 2. 41. *There were added to the Church about three thousand souls.* Nor were these extraordinary gifts peculiar to the Apostles only, but during the time of conversion were common to all the believers. Thus throughout the whole story of the *Acts*, we hardly meet with one Baptism, but we find some extraordinary descent of the Holy Ghost following it; so in the case of *Cornelius*, and what is more notorious, in the conversion of the whole city of *Samaria*, when the apostles came down, and laid their hands on them they receiv'd the Holy Ghost: Not that every one were endu'd with all gifts, but that every one had some according to their measure. Thus *St. Paul* tells his *Corinthians*, chap. xii. 28. *There were some Apostles, some prophets, some teachers, miracles, gifts of healing, helps of government, diversity of tongues:* and in his Epistle to the *Eph.* ch. 4. v. 12. he tells us the reason why these extraordinary gifts, these miraculous *χαρίσματα* were given. They were given for the perfecting of the saints. *Περὶ τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων*, which metaphor, as the physicians explain it, for tis borrowed from their faculty, signifies the restoring a disjointed member to its natural place in the body again. So *Galen* defines *καταρτισμὸς* to be *μεταγωγὴ τῶν ὑσῶν ἐκ τῆ παρὰ φύσιν τόπῃ εἰς τὸν κατὰ φύσιν*. Now both *Jew* and *Gentile* having

having estrang'd themselves from the true church of God, this was the only method of re-joining and re-uniting those broken members to the body of Christ again.

From this account of the reason and end of the gifts, it is plain, they were design'd only for the state of conversion, which is further confirm'd to us, by the other part of the reason express'd in the latter end of the same verse: They were given for the edification, the building up of the body of Christ. Now the building must necessarily refer to the state of conversion, the state of establishment being concern'd in nothing but only the final complement, the finishing of it.

I have spoke the longer to the miraculous gifts of the state of conversion, because notwithstanding they were highly useful, and beneficial to the church in that state, and always would be, would it please God always to afford them; yet we shall find the abuse of them, by some indiscreet persons, to have been the cause of those contentions in the church of *Corinth*, which gave St. *Paul* the trouble of this epistle. For St. *Paul* having finished his designs at *Athens*, came to *Corinth*, under the proconsulate of *Gallio*, towards the latter end of *Claudius*; where having preach'd the gospel for a year and six months, he had in that time, according to the promise made him by God, in a vision, at his first coming

thither, *Acts* xviii. 10. converted much people in that city; which time of the Apostle's preaching may reasonably be allowed for the state of conversion to that particular church of *Corinth*: And that it did extend no further seems plain, because though *Apollos* did not come to *Corinth* till after the departure of *St. Paul*, yet do we not find that he added any thing to the Apostle's labours, but only *helped them much who had believed through grace*, *Acts* xviii. 27.

From this determination of the state of conversion, it may on the other side be as probably conjectured that *St. Paul*, at his departure, would not leave so numerous a church as he had then collected, without taking some care for the establishment of it, and fixing ordinary governors there, who, though they were to act under the apostolick superintendency, yet were they wholly to manage and govern the affairs of that church during the Apostle's absence: Now the settling the government of the church in the hands of ordinary governors, as it was new to those who had heretofore known nothing but only the unlimited power of an Apostle, so was it thought by some of the gifted brethren, and men of pretence to a greater spirit of holiness, to be too much a restraint upon the spirit; not that really it was so, but because it is the natural infirmity of mankind to be proud of any thing

thing they think excellent or eminent in themselves, they could not brook to submit to such, to whom they thought themselves equal at least, if not superior in spiritual gifts. For that the *Judaizers* were not at all concern'd in this schism, but the *Pneumatici*, the spiritual men only, is not only plain from St. *Paul's* character of them quite through this whole epistle, who blames them for their too much boasting, their too highly valuing themselves upon their spiritual gifts, and at the last verse of the 12th chapter bids them, if they must be seeking after spiritual gifts, to covet earnestly the best gifts, and so in the chapter following pathetically recommends unto them the gift of charity.

That I say these spiritual and gifted men were the troublers of *Corinth*, is plain not only from this account of St. *Paul*, but also from St. *Clement* of *Rome*, who was the apostle's disciple and successor, not only in time but argument too; who not many years after the apostle's death wrote an epistle to the church of *Corinth*, then again tumultuous, or else which may seem probable from the likeness of the schism, from the apostle's time even till then continuing so; in which he does something plainer than the apostle, because the ordinary government of the church was by that time firmly establish'd, blame them for making their

spiritual gifts a pretence of disobedience to their ordinary governors; and like a true disciple of the apostle's, often inculcates to them that golden rule, Ἀγάπη χάρισμα ἐκ ἑχεται, ἀγάπη ἔσται δὲ ζῆλος. *Charity will have no schisms, admits of no seditions.*

Thus have I endeavoured to give you a true and impartial account of the original occasion of the *Corinthian* schism; in which we find these very gifts, that were given for the edifying, the building of the church of Christ, had like before it was well finish'd or compacted, by the imprudent management of some indiscrete persons, to have been imploy'd to the ruin and pulling it in pieces again; for the preventing which, and the securing peace, unity, and unanimity amongst them, St. *Paul* makes use of this argument,

The pastor's which are set over you are the ministers of God.

But the ministers of God are to be judg'd by God only; *i. e.* in relation to that service which they do for him.

Therefore judge you nothing before the time, &c.

The maxim or major proposition is what at present lies under our consideration, which, if well explain'd, will give light and evidence enough to the other parts of this argument.

In considering therefore the dignity of the Pastoral Office, we must take care, first, that

that we do not carry it so high as to fall under that blameable character which *St. Peter* forewarns us of in his first epistle, chap. v. 3. of domineering and lording it over the flock of Christ: For he whose kingdom is built upon an universal love and charity, who was proclaimed with a *glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men*, cou'd never commission any with that narrow spirited principle of power only, without the consideration of goodness join'd with it; and such is properly a domineering spirit, where the power only is exercis'd, and the goodness of it neglected. And therefore, wherever we meet with that, we must look upon those that exercise it, as unfaithful stewards of the mysteries of God. Ambition has such a charm with it, and impotent authority is so very necessary for its support, that because when barefac'd they carry such a character of baseness as would affright, therefore do they generally cover their designs under some more specious colour and pretence; it is the thing which most ambitious spirits aim at, nor do they value the obliquity of it, if they can but find out any cover to carry off the odium of the name. Thus when the exorbitant power of the bishops of *Rome*, without any conscience of a crime, had remov'd their neighbours landmark, and stretch'd their Diocese, as far

almost and wide, as were the limits of the christian world; all this lordly usurpation was most christianly qualify'd with that humble title of *servus servorum Dei*. And on the other hand we know there are those, who industriously appear in sheep's clothing, would seem to be the meekest, the humblest, the meanest of the flock of Christ, who are yet within ravening wolves, like those hypocrites the gospel tells us of, who under the pretence of long prayer, devour widows houses. But I need not enlarge upon this topick, for the common experience of their practice has sufficiently taught us, that whilst they too much pretend to be the servants of the people, they forget they are the ministers of God.

Thus is humility made the cloak of pride, and by these means they may promote the sinister ends and designs of their ambition; but the dignity of the Pastoral Office still suffers: These men know not what manner of spirit they are of; for as an ambitious design of dominion over the flock of Christ is too much above, so is that fawning hypocritical pretence of humility, whereby they usually endeavour to establish the other, too much below the dignity of the Pastoral Office. It is therefore our greatest honour that we are accounted the ministers of Christ, the servants of God, and stewards of his mysteries; for this makes us, in relation

lation to the people, their pastors, teachers, fathers, guides, ambassadors sent to them from God. To understand therefore the dignity of this office we must consider it first absolutely, as a trust or charge committed to us by our King and Master, whose officers, whose servants we are. 2dly, Respectively in relation to the discharge of it for the good of those persons for whose sake it was committed to us. For such a power as is intrusted with any for the advantage of mankind is highly honourable, and answers all the ends either of a temporal or spiritual government. Thus, in relation to the civil world, *St. Paul* bids us be subject, because they are the ministers of God to us for good; for 'tis power and goodness join'd, which makes all dominion not only desirable but honourable too.

That we may therefore the better understand the nature of this trust committed to us, we must briefly consider the nature of that kingdom in which this ministerial office is committed to us. Now that almighty power, by the very act of Creation, did acquire an universal dominion over us; that this dominion did subject us to laws, and consequently requir'd obedience from us: that Almighty goodness, and Almighty wisdom, design'd this oeconomy for the advantage and further happiness of his creature, are I think such truths as want no other evi-

dence but the bare connexion of the terms to prove them: If therefore we fall short of that happiness which was design'd for us, it could not be the fault of the governor but the disobedience of the subject; and indeed the great King and Governor of Heaven and Earth might have taken the advantage of the forfeiture, and according to the demerit of the disobedience, have subjected the creature to eternal misery, as *St. Paul* tells us, he did for a time subject it to vanity. But it pleas'd the Almighty, out of infinite compassion to his creature, to send the Son of God into the world to redeem lost Man, which he did at the price of his own dear and precious blood; by which he made satisfaction for our offence, and was upon that satisfaction made, admitted an intercessor and mediator for us.

Now by this act of redemption, God the Redeemer acquir'd a new dominion over us, for this is call'd a new creation, and we new creatures; so *Eph. ii. 10.* *We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works*, therefore in this as in the first act of creation, this new acquir'd dominion must subject us to some laws, and those laws must require from us some obedience; not that it is by works of righteousness which we have done, but by grace, *i. e.* by his merit, and by his good spirit working in and with us, to the sanctifying and justifying

fying of us, by his-intercession for our faults and infirmities, by his mediation with God's Justice for our unrighteousness that he hath sav'd us, and therefore this is peculiarly call'd Christ's mediatorial kingdom; in which, as *St. Paul* says, 2 Cor. iv. 5. *We preach not our selves but Christ Jesus the Lord, and our selves servants for Christ's sake.*

In this mediatorial kingdom therefore, there is a trust committed to us, to promulge the laws of it, to convince mankind of the benefits of them, to exhort and persuade as much as in us lies an obedience to them, the consideration of which made *St. Paul* say, *there is a necessity laid upon me, yea woe is me if I preach not the gospel.* This our Saviour did whilst he was upon earth himself with great power: Thus when he had finished his sermon on the mount, the multitude were astonish'd, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the *Scribes*: And at other times they confest, he spake as never man spoke; and when his oeconomy on earth was finish'd, he sent out his Apostles with an universal commission to go and teach all nations: And that they might be well assur'd their authority was good, he tells them also, *As my father sent me, so send I you.* And as the Apostles were thus sent, so did they also send others; so that the bishops, who were the Apostles successors,

successors, did as really succeed them in their divine mission and fullness of ordinary authority as they did Christ. I say in their ordinary authority, because the extraordinary apostolical *χαρισματα* were proper to the planters not the governors of the church, as has already been prov'd. And though the Apostles receiv'd their mission immediately from our Saviour, yet was it not necessary their successors should; it being an own'd maxim by all nations, that the legality of a just conveyance is plac'd in those only who are in present possession of the true right. Thus is it prov'd there is a trust committed to us, and the authority of our commission being divine, it must be unexceptionable.

If therefore with all possible honour and esteem we respect those, whose commission'd authority is instrumental to us for a well being here, by securing to us peace and tranquility, and giving us a free and quiet enjoyment of all those good things, which in this transitory life we mistakenly call our own; how much greater ought our esteem for those be, who are instrumental to us, and that by God's appointment too, in procuring for us an everlasting peace and tranquility, an endless joy and security, and assuring us too of such a propriety in them, that when we are once in the full possession of them, neither the malice of the devil,

devil, nor the combin'd iniquity of man shall be able to give us any disturbance in the enjoyment of it! which leads us to consider,

2dly, The trust committed to us in relation to those for whom we are to discharge it.

We are stewards of the mysteries of God, and therefore there are some to whom, as it is the office of stewards, we must faithfully dispense these mysteries. Mystery is a word that has of late much puzzled the world, though if we consider the original and use of words, we shall find but very little reason to make a controversy of a verbal criticism; for words receiving their signification by institution, that is, by compact and agreement of those that use them; there can be no other difficulty in them but only the considering the original use and signification impos'd upon them, or else some translated one analogous to that. Thus, for instance, the word before us in the language of the New Testament, (for we do not once meet with it in the Old) is borrow'd, as are many other from the superstition of the *Greeks*; amongst whom it signify'd some secret doctrine or practice belonging to the worship of some peculiar deity, which was not to be prophan'd, or made publickly known, but to such only who had been particularly initiated or admitted to the peculiar worship of that deity: And analogously

gously to this, whenever it is apply'd to the truths of God, we find it always to signify some such truth as could not otherwise have been known to mankind, had it not been revealed unto them; so that if this be a right account of the word mystery, the treasures committed to our dispensation are all the revealed truths of the gospel. So St. *Paul* upon the same occasion we are now met together for, adviseth *Timothy*, *That his deacons be such as hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.* And wherever we meet the word prefix'd to any gospel truth, we are sure to find it such an one as is some considerable object of our faith, not knowable by natural powers, or any human sagacity. Thus *Ephes. v. 32. This is a great mystery, but I speak of Christ and his church;* that the Son of God should take upon him human nature, make a new covenant for us, gather to himself a peculiar people under the title of his church, and then carry up that nature into heaven, for 'tis the Man Christ Jesus who is the mediator for us, and fix it there at the head of both the church militant here below, and the triumphant one above, is such a mystery as none could ever discover to us but only he who graciously design'd it for us; and therefore does the belief of an holy catholic church most worthily stand amongst
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the rank of our *Credenda*. I need not multiply instances to prove the truth of what is now before us, for all the articles of our Creed are so many mysteries, and so is whatever else comes to our knowledge by means of the gospel revelation.

If these be then the treasures committed to our trust, they are such as may command the best attendance to our dispensation of them from those, for whose sakes they are committed to our charge; for if faith be the gospel condition of salvation, the Apostle's argument to the *Rom.* ch. x. is very strong for the dispensation of such a stewardship: *How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach without they be sent? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* But there are some who are pleas'd to call this a following only the beaten way of dull schemes and methods, and think it too narrow a confinement to reasonable, free-thinking and free-born souls; for the scriptures are open to us all, and 'tis the promise of the gospel covenant that we shall be all *θεοδιδάκτοι*, taught of God. 'Tis true indeed, the scriptures are open, and the *Pereans* were commended for examining the word preach'd to them by this rule, though it was preach'd by St. *Paul* himself, yet still we find the dispensation

penfation of the miniftry was neceffary, and if we will be taught of God, we muft be content to be taught in his method; for when the gift is perfectly gratuitous, 'tis peevifh to refufe it, unlefs our benefactor will be pleas'd to honour us in our own methods of receiving it. If we do as we ought, by frequent reading the holy fcriptures instruct our felves, and learn our duty both to God and man, we fhall find our part of it to be our attendance to the miniftry there prefcrib'd us, for our guides and teachers; we fhall there find their office neceffary to make us members of that body, without the fociety of which we can have no title to the promifes. After our admission into the covenant, we may from thence learn our inability to perform even gospel obedience; and though the grace of repentance may be the peculiar gift of God to us, yet muft it firft be preach'd. And then we learn the affurance and comfort of it muft depend upon that remiffion and abfolution, which are wholly trufted in the hands of the miniftry.

Though the prayer of a faithful man may avail much, yet is it ftronger when join'd with the church, for when two or three are gather'd together, 'tis there he has promis'd to be in the midft of them. In fhort, the facrament of the eucharift, that great instrument and conveyance of grace to us, is
wholly

wholly plac'd in the office of the ministry. 'Tis they must bless, must consecrate it for us; and then there is nothing can hinder its gracious effects upon us but only our own unworthy receiving of it. This is the office of our stewardship, not only of great honour and dignity, but of great weight and concernment too, no less than the dispensation of all those gracious methods of salvation discover'd to mankind by the gospel revelation, for our reconciliation and return to God. Whatever entertainment it may meet with amongst others, it ought highly to be our concern to fit our selves with all the qualifications necessary for the support of such a dignity.

The consideration of all these qualifications, which are necessary for this work of the Lord, is too large a theme for us now to engage in; wherefore I shall briefly sum them all up, as they may be all I think compris'd in these two of Knowledge and Fidelity: For if we do but know the utmost extent of the charge committed to us, and are but faithful in the discharge of it, then I think we may venture to say, we are able to give a good account of our stewardship. Knowledge in general is of a large extent, and requires more time than we have, and more pains than we are usually willing to bestow upon it. But 'tis sufficient for us if as our Saviour directs us, we know

know him who is the only true God, and him whom he hath sent, Jesus Christ, because this he assures us is eternal life. So *St. Paul* in this very epistle to the *Corinthians*, in the beginning of the 2d chapter, tells them, *He came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto them the testimony of God, for he determin'd not to know any thing among them save Jesus Christ, and him crucify'd.* And indeed the mission of the Son by God the Father, and his submission to the death of the cross for us, are that peace of God which passeth knowledge. Yea what a noble entertainment does a meditation of this kind afford to an enlighten'd soul, when all the counsels of heaven for the salvation of fallen Man are laid open before it, the unexpressible kindness of God the Creator to his creature, for 'tis indeed a mystery of love, that he should send his Son into the world to save sinners: The condescending kindness of God our redeemer, who for our sakes underwent not only the miseries of an human life, but the bitter pains of a shameful death too: The gracious assistance of God our justifier, who has been pleas'd to seal all these benefits to us not only in the word of truth, but by his gracious working in our souls also.

Thus glorious is the knowledge of our trust in the object of it; but we are more
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concern'd to know what measure of it is requisite in the dispensation of it. And here we must, as St. *Paul* adviseth *Timothy*, chap. ii. 15. *Study to shew our selves approv'd unto God, workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*; where ὀρθολομεῖν (as Mr. *Hooker* judiciously observes) is not such an opening the sentences of holy scripture, as to draw all things favourably spoken unto to one side; but whatever is reprehensive, severe and sharp, they have others on the contrary part, whom that must always concern; by which over partial and unindifferent proceedings, while they thus labour among the people to divide the word, they make the word a means to divide and distract the people: But it is such a preaching as sets forth only soundness of doctrine, and stands in meaning opposite to καινολομεῖν, the broaching of new opinions against that which is received. And this criticism is confirm'd by the verses following, where the Apostle reprehends *Hymenæus* and *Philetus*, who concerning the truth had err'd; and thereby overthrew the faith of some.

Our knowledge therefore must be such as can upon occasion show a masterly skill in the understanding of the scriptures, such as can guard us against all heterodox novelties, which (as St. *Paul* says) *eat as doth a canker, till they have corrupted the whole mass*. For heresy, like some of our

more refin'd poisons, does not shew all its strength at once, but creeps upon us by undiscernable degrees; under the colour of perverted texts, and forc'd interpretations, passing a great while for wholesome and sound doctrine, till by these means the minds of men are so far corrupted, that they are ready to receive the very malignity of it, and then it breaks forth with all its fury, and strikes at the very root of christianity. When we have therefore secur'd to our selves such a proportion of knowledge as will enable us not only to give a *reason of our hope*, but also to *exhort*, and when that will not do, *convince gainsayers*: when we have well fix'd the fundamentals of our religion, making Christ himself God blessed for ever, the corner stone; there remains then no more but the suiting our abilities so to the several capacities of the charge committed to us, *that speaking the truth in love, we may grow up into him in all things, who is the head even Christ: From whom the whole body fully join'd together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh encrease of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

Now the doing this is indeed a piece of useful and excellent knowledge, and requires for a perfect attainment to it, more
time,

time, pains and study, than is usually thought of; for if *Tully* could require the whole circle of arts and sciences to the instruction of his perfect orator, what subsidious helps are not necessary for us! what assistances of all kind of learning ought we not to have, who are to deliver the most abstruse truths, but such as are highly concerning, and the most universally beneficial to mankind! and yet have all the passion, prejudice, and vanity of temper to deal with, that poor corrupted human nature can be guilty of.

Time will not here permit us to descend to particulars, but I cannot help remarking the great blessing this nation has long enjoy'd of a knowing ministry, by whose pains and industry they have the scriptures fairly open'd to them, both in plain and learned commentaries and expositions; they have all the several duties of christianity laid before them, in such inviting and easy methods, as would persuade, nay, as the Apostle says of Christ's love, *constrain them to the undertaking of them*. Lastly, to convince them there is nothing aim'd at in all this, but only their information and instruction, they have even the very controversies of religion brought home to them in their own language; so that if the readers would but take half the pains their teachers have done,

there ought certainly to be an end of all dispute, schism and contention amongst us.

And this remark is a fair argument of the second qualification I mentioned, which ought to be in the ministry, *viz.* Fidelity. Now Fidelity denotes care and diligence, such a diligence and such a care as is always attending to, and fix'd upon the commands of our great Master, in obeying which, we are sure we can never err, because we have int he directing of them an Almighty wisdom to secure us from all folly, an Almighty goodness from all evil. And this obedience to these commands will carry us on to be so far instrumental in promoting those noble ends and designs he intended by them, *viz.* The setting forth of his glory, and the setting forward the salvation of human souls, that we need not doubt of that comfortable welcome, *Come thou good and faithful servant.* When we are able once with our Saviour to say, *Those thou hast given me I have kept, and none of them have perish'd except it was the sons of perdition.* Sons of perdition there will be, but we must take care they be not so by our negligence or fault.

Wherefore let us pray to God to give us his grace and heavenly benediction, that both by our life and doctrine we may set forth his glory, and set forward the salvation of all men.



SERMON XXV.

JOHN, xvi. 7.

It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.



THE nature of that oeconomy which our Saviour undertook for us here on earth, being such as could not well consist with a perpetual abode here; for he had taken upon him not only the likeness, but the infirmities of mortal nature, and in that he was to suffer too, because otherwise there could have been no satisfaction made for our sins; and further yet to compleat this satisfaction, it was necessary also, that he should ascend up on high, that he should, as the eternal High Priest, enter into the holy of holies, and there present this unspotted sacrifice of himself before the throne of God: Upon the acceptation of which

he was to sit down at the right hand of Majesty on high, there to remain for ever a mediator and intercessor for us.

These tremendous mysteries of our salvation being I say thus utterly inconsistent with his abode here on earth, it seems to have been the greatest care and solicitude of our Saviour, how to prepare his Apostles for this departure, how to strengthen and secure the faith of those believers, whom he was to leave behind him. His three days absence whilst under the power of death, did shake and stagger the most constant of his followers: And we find by the discourse of those two disciples who were going to *Emmaus*, they knew not what to determine of his sufferings, but resolv'd all their faith into that cold expression, *We thought that it had been he who was to restore the throne of David*. And indeed the great difficulty in convincing them concerning the truth of his resurrection, seems to make it probable, that they had not any greater opinion of him, than as a good and holy man, who was now departed, and slept with his fathers.

Wherefore our Saviour foreseeing this their weakness, and forewarning them of it too, in that prophetic admonition, *The time shall come, when ye shall be dispers'd as sheep without a shepherd*, which was then certainly if ever the most eminently

nently fulfill'd, when our Saviour was under the power of the grave, and the Holy Ghost not yet descended upon them: Our Saviour I say, foreseeing this their weakness, seems to have made it his greatest care to fortify them against his final departure and ascension into heaven; to which end we find it to be the main scope and design of this heavenly discourse, which he had with them at his last supper, recorded in the 14th, 15th and 16th chapters of St. *John*, to convince them, *That it was not only necessary for him, but expedient or profitable for them also, that he should leave them, that he must go to his father: But that there were many mansions in his father's kingdom, and that he was going to prepare them for them: That though he must leave them, yet he would not leave them comfortless, but would send another comforter unto them.*

Since therefore the sending of the comforter, seems to have been one of the chief ends or designs of our Saviour's ascension; I shall from these words discourse to you,

- I. Something concerning the nature and office of the Holy Ghost, so far as it is deliver'd to us in the word Comforter.

II. The expedience of our Saviour's Ascension, that this comforter might descend upon us.

III. And then thirdly, consider the effects of this mission of the Holy Ghost, in the several gifts and graces of it.

I. *Something concerning the nature and office of the Holy Ghost, so far as it is deliver'd to us in the word Comforter.*

And I shall not here trouble you with the history of the *Macedonians*, or their younger brethren, the *Socinians*, of these times, who deny the divinity of the Holy Ghost, and by asserting the Unity, destroy the Trinity of the Godhead : It is sufficient for us that the church doth, and hath always declared Three Persons in the Divinity, all one in nature, but different in order, whereof the Holy Ghost was always reckoned the Third : And that as the Son was begotten of the Father by eternal generation, so the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father and the Son, by an eternal procession. Those who mistake that mission of the Holy Ghost, which is so peculiar to the gospel of Christ, for his first *Being* in nature, must

must certainly be very little acquainted with the scriptures: For if they did but consider the very incarnation of our Saviour, they will there find the Holy Ghost to be the person employ'd in that mysterious conception. And the frequent mention made of the spirit of God throughout the whole œconomy of the Old Testament, doth sufficiently demonstrate his Being before that mission, especially if we may be allow'd to explain the 26th verse of the 1st of *Genesis*; *faciamus hominem*, as several of the antients have done, to be the result of the counsels and determinations of the whole Trinity; we shall find the Holy Ghost to have been with the Father and the Son before the foundation of the world, before time was, and consequently from all eternity, which interpretation may seem to receive some confirmation from the 3d verse of that chapter; where the Holy Ghost himself tells us, *That the very beginning of the creation was the spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters*. And thus much may in short suffice to prove the eternal as well as the divine nature of the Holy Ghost; because

I hasten to give you some account of that character of this holy spirit, which seems to be peculiar to the œconomy of the gospel; which is given to us by our Saviour in the text, the Comforter.

Παράκλητος, here rendered Comforter, is a word which we meet with but five times in the whole New Testament, and those all of them in St. *John's* writings, four times in his gospel, in this very discourse of our Saviour's, and once in his first Epistle. The due explication therefore of this word, will lead us into a true understanding of what is here in the text meant by Comforter: And we find this word to be sometimes apply'd to the Holy Ghost, as here in the gospel; sometimes to our Saviour himself, as in the 2d chapter of his first epistle, ver. 1. when apply'd to our Saviour it is render'd advocate; *If any one sin, we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous.* [Παράκλητον ἔχομεν] The same word which we meet with in the text, and the same which our Saviour himself used when he promised to send the Holy Ghost unto his disciples, [ἄλλον Παράκλητον δώσει ὑμῖν.] *I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter*; or as it might have been render'd, another Advocate: From all which it seems to be plain, that there is something in this notion of Paraclete, which is common both to our Saviour, and to the Holy Ghost, which St. *Chrysostome* doth manifestly prove, when in his gloss upon that text, he explains ἄλλον Παράκλητον by τέλειν ἄλλον ὡς ἐμέ.

Wherefore

Wherefore if we can but trace out in what sense it was that our Saviour was an advocate for us, it will certainly lead us into a true understanding of the advocacy or comforts of the Holy Ghost.

But to do this effectually, It will be necessary first to give you as clear a notion as we can of the office of an advocate in general, and from thence shew you how applicable it is both to our Saviour and to the Holy Ghost.

An advocate denotes a Person who undertakes the cause of another, and was in frequent use both in the *Grecian* and *Roman* law, though with some difference: And from thence certainly is it that this holy penman borrowed this word. Nor is it reasonable to think, that he would use it in any other sense than what was then the common and receiv'd use of it.

The *Grecian* *Παράκλητος*, or advocate, seems to have been a person who undertook the cause of another, not so much by pleading the merits of the cause, for that was the proper business of the *Πίστορες*, or Common Pleaders, but rather when the cause seems to have been too weak, to admit of any real defence, to undertake it by interposing something of his own, his petitions, prayers, and intercessions with the Judges; not so much in justice to acquit, as in mercy to remit the penalty,
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and pardon the offender. And we find both by *Demosthenes* and *Isæus*, that it was the common custom among the *Grecians* τὸς φίλους παρακαλέσαι, as well as τὸς ῥήτορας παρασκευάσαι, not only to instruct the common pleaders in their cause, but also to call in their friends to be their advocates and assistants.

The office of the *Roman* Advocate went further than this, and did consist chiefly in these three things. 1. It was his office plainly to instruct his client in the cause, by clearing all the doubts and difficulties of it, and to put him in the right way of managing it to the best advantage. 2. It was his office to comfort and hearten up his client, that when he was in a right method he might not despond, but proceed chearfully and vigorously in the prosecution of his cause. 3. It was his office to join himself to his client, and to make up as it were one person with him, that where the client fail'd in prosecution of his cause, there the advocate should take it up, and perform what the client through weakness or inability was not able to do.

These short accounts of the notion of an advocate, if rightly attended to, will, with an easy application, lead us into a right understanding of that office, which both our Saviour and the Holy Ghost have under-

undertaken for us as our advocates. And as to that notion of an advocate in use among the *Greeks*, whose office it was to interpose his prayers and supplications with the judges, to move their compassion towards his client, we find our Saviour to have been in the highest sense an advocate for us.

So deplorable was the state of mankind, when our Saviour undertook their cause, that there was not left them the least pretence of a justification! Nothing indeed but a fearful looking for of judgment; *For we were all* (as the apostle saith) *both Jew and Gentile under condemnation*. In this miserable condition were we, when the Son of God himself did vouchsafe to leave the right hand of Majesty and Glory, to forego the power of a judge, and join himself to us wretched criminals at the bar. And to make his advocacy for us both more sensible and more effectual, was pleas'd to unite the human nature to the divine; and in that glorious personality present himself before the father as our advocate or intercessor. And when prayers and petitions, such as were able certainly if ever any were to provoke mercy, could not yet set aside the justice of an offended judge, but that the remission of our sins requir'd blood for the attonement of them, he laid down his precious life, which he had taken
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up upon our account, as a voluntary sacrifice for us; and by that means did effectually atone for and expiate our guilt: *Greater love than this hath no man, than that one should lay down his life for his Friend.* This was a comfortable advocacy indeed, where the advocate himself redeem'd the forfeiture of our lives at the price of his own. But seeing that this highly charitable office did put our Saviour beyond all capacity of assisting us any more in the same kind, for he was but to suffer once; and that the weakness and frailty of mortal nature, whose cause he has undertaken, was not able to bear up against all the artifice and subtlety of Satan their accuser, he did at his departure think it necessary to send another comforter unto them, who should be present with them here as their advocate or patron, whilst he appear'd before the Father for them as their intercessor, lest he might seem to leave them like pupils or orphans, who without the just assistance of a wise guardian, might easily be defrauded of that heavenly inheritance which he had purchased for them: And this as well as that of sending another comforter is part of his last promise to them, *ἐν ἀφῆσω ὑμᾶς ὀρφανούς*, *John xiv. 18. I will not leave you comfortless*, or as the margin reads it, *Orphans*; not but that he hath left the title to it clear enough in that

that New Testament which he sign'd with his own blood, and left us for the security of our inheritance. So that where the presence of our Saviour, I mean his visible œconomy, doth cease, the comforts of the Holy Ghost begin; and he, as the *Roman* advocates us'd to do, undertakes our cause for us.

1. By clearing all the doubts and difficulties of it, and putting us in the right way of managing it to the best advantage; in this sense is it that he is call'd by *Isaiab*, chap. xi. 2. *The spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might; the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.* The consequence of whose coming is as the prophet there tells us, *That we shall be of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord*, v. 3. *That the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea*, v. 9. The greatest difficulty we have to struggle with in the managing this cause of our eternal happiness, is to retrieve those errors we had run our selves into, by suffering our selves to be ill directed by our own corrupt affections. Happiness is the end we all aim'd at; but we pursu'd it the wrong way: Whilst we left the ways of God and true reason, to pursue it through the bias'd affections of corrupt nature: For our natural corruption doth consist in
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the averſation of our wills from goodneſs, and depravation of our affections. So that whiſt we were in this condition, we thought we did then attain our happineſs, when we fulfill'd the luſts of our fleſh; whereas like miſerable drudges we did only ſlave our ſelves into our own ruin, wherefore the Holy Ghoſt doth here act the part of a faithful advocate to us; renewing us in all the parts and faculties of our ſouls; enlightening our underſtandings with the beauty of holineſs; and freeing our wills from that biaſs of our corrupt affections, whereby we were led captives unto ſin. And this aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt is what the ſcripture ſo often calls, the being regenerate or born again: For being in our carnal life wholly ſenſeleſs and dead as to a ſpiritual life, we are hereby quickened again in our ſpirits, and begin to find it our greateſt intereſt to mortify the deeds of the fleſh.

Immortal and eternal happineſs is what we were deſign'd and created for; immortal and endleſs miſery is what the devil would ſeduce and bring us to. He as an adverſary, though under the notion and appearance of a friend, doth tempt us, (for it is his buſineſs firſt to deceive and then to accuſe,) the Holy Ghoſt, as our true friend, patron, or advocate, undertakes our cauſe againſt him, ſo neceſſary it is, (as *Irenæus* tells us) *ut ubi accuſatorem habemus*

habemus, illic babeamus Paracletum; where we find an Accuser, we should have an Advocate too. We found him too subtle even for the innocence of our first parents. And therefore our Saviour, who came as the second Adam, hath been pleas'd to give us this additional assistance of the holy Spirit, as a faithful security to his church, against all the subtlety and wiliness of the adversary: there cannot be that temptation, so subtle and so insinuating, but this holy Spirit gives us strength enough, if not to subdue, at least to avoid it.

It was the promise concerning the Holy Ghost, *that when he came he should guide us into all truth*, not only by shewing us wherein our error lay, and teaching us to avoid that, but also by a sufficient assistance, in our progress and search after truth it self. And this is the first part of the advocacy of the Holy Ghost, wherein he clears the way for us, makes our cause plain and easy to us. But he doth,

2dly, Undertake our cause for us, by comforting and chearing us up; that when he hath thus put us in a right method, we may not despond, but proceed chearfully and vigorously in the prosecution of our cause. In this sense is it that St. Paul prays for his Ephesians, *that they may be strengthened with might by the spirit in the inward man*. Eph. iii. 16. Thus also

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doth the Psalmist pray, *Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy Spirit from me ; O give me the comfort of thy help again, and stablish me with thy free Spirit,* Psal. li. v. 11, 12. And thus doth St. Paul tell Timothy. *God hath not given us the spirit of fear or cowardise, but of power or courage, of love and of a sound mind.* Πνεῦμα δυνάμεως καὶ σωφροσύνης, A spirit of strength, a spirit which is not easily to be shaken, which acts upon consistent principles, with prudence, with steadiness and resolution. All which seems to be imply'd in δυνάμεις and σωφροσύνης join'd together.

Thus when the Devil leads us on by little, and, as we think, inconsiderable neglects and omissions of our duty, at last to do the work of the Lord carelessly and negligently ; 'tis the business of this holy Spirit to quicken and enliven our devotions, to make us sensible of that duty which we owe to God, and then certainly we cannot perform it negligently. Thus is it call'd by the prophet Zechariah, *the spirit of grace and supplications.* Or when the adversary doth more boldly attempt us, and thinks by violence or persecution to break our measures and baffle all our endeavours ; then is it the business of this holy Spirit, to strengthen us against, and prepare us for them

them with meekness and humility, with patience and long suffering.

Thus therefore, whether the adversary doth with secret and sly insinuations attempt us, or more openly and with violence attack us, the grace of this holy Spirit is sufficient for us : And we have nothing more to do, but to proceed in the way thro' which he directs us, chearfully prosecuting the main end, for which we are design'd, our eternal happiness and salvation ; trusting all the rubs and difficulties we are likely to meet with, to the disposal of that wise Spirit, who as he hath promised, will certainly make his grace sufficient for us.

But further yet, He is an advocate, or undertakes our cause for us.

3dly. By joining himself to us, and making as it were one person with us ; that when we fail in rightly managing of our cause, there he may take it up, and perform what we through weakness or inability are not able to perform. In this sense is the holy Spirit call'd, *The Comforter which abides with us for ever.* John xiv. 16. And again, *The Spirit which dwells with us, and shall be in us.* 17. So also Rom. viii. 9. *The Spirit of God dwells in us, and if we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his.* Again, 1 Cor. vi. 19. *Our body is said to be the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in us, which we have of God.*

Thus do we see how this holy Spirit doth really engage himself in our affairs, becoming as it were one person with us ; inhabiting our souls, and animating the whole man, helping our infirmities : for so weak is our mortal nature, that it scarcely knows its own weakness and infirmity ; wherefore the Holy Ghost doth *συνανήλαμψε δυνάει*, take up the burthen with us, nay for us ; helps us to bear or sustain it : And because, as the Apostle tells us, *We know not what we should pray for as we ought*, Rom. viii. 26. when our devotions are at a nonplus, when the ignorance and blindness of our hearts fills our addresses to God Almighty, either with Petitions not suitable to our condition or to the wisdom of God ; when we ask what is not fitting God should grant us, and what in pity to us he does oft deny ; then doth the Spirit rectify our devotions, and truly represent unto the Father the necessity of our condition, though not with words, yet with what is far more eloquent, far more persuasive, groans that are unutterable. *And he that searcheth the heart, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because it maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.* Rom. viii. 27.

Thus have I shewn you wherein chiefly the comfortable advocacy of the Holy Ghost for us consists ; how it is that he be-
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comes our comforter, patron or advocate. The next thing to be consider'd, is

II. *The Expedience of our Saviour's Ascension; that this comforter might descend.*

Expedience implies in it not only a bare necessity, but a convenience too. The best method therefore of considering the expedience of our Saviour's ascension, is to consider what advantage did thereby accrue to us. The particular advantage which our Saviour here mentions, is the sending the Holy Ghost: Wherefore the whole at last resolves into this enquiry. What was the necessity why our Saviour's humanity must ascend into heaven, before the Holy Ghost could descend upon earth? Which will I think be answer'd, if we consider, That the doctrines and sufferings of our Saviour upon earth had they gone no further, had really been no more than good Instructions, enforc'd upon us by the powerful recommendation of a great and good example. Wherefore to make a true and full propitiation for us, the lamb was not only to be slain, but offer'd too: and that divine person who had taken up humanity for us, and laid it down again upon the cross, was also to carry it up into the true holy of holies the heavens, there to present it before the throne of God, before he could be ad-

mitted as an high-priest, an intercessor or advocate for us.

And herein lies the expedience of our Saviour's ascension, necessary to him for the completion of, advantageous to us by the compleating, the reconciliation of mankind. Our Saviour's *Consummatum est* upon the Cross, did indeed actually determine all that was to be suffer'd for us : but yet the adequate reconciliation of the creature, cannot otherwise be said to be at that time fulfill'd ; but as our Saviour knew the purity and perfection of that sacrifice to be such, as was not only satisfactory, but acceptable too, to that infinite Justice, to which he was to reconcile us : For no satisfaction can be said to be truly made, till it is really accepted of; to convince us therefore beyond all doubt, that the creature was again, notwithstanding all its lapses, reconcil'd to the Creator, it was necessary that humanity it self should with triumph be admitted into heaven, and become the glorious companion of the Divinity.

Thus far was the ascension necessary for the reconciliation of mankind, but reconciling was not all, there was something to be done too, for the reinstating of it.

Now if the ascension of our Saviour was thus necessary for the reconciling ; it must be much more so for the reinstating of us : because there is no reinstating, but where
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there must be first a reconciliation. Now by reinstating is meant here, the restoring us to such a condition by this new covenant as that we might be able to secure that eternal happiness, for which we were at our first Creation design'd; but by the fall had made our selves utterly incapable of obtaining. That is, the repairing the decay'd faculties of human nature, tho' not by restoring them to their primitive perfection; for even there we find, they were too weak for the subtlety of their adversary; yet by the accession of such an assistance as might be equivalent, if not superior to the excellence and perfection of primitive Innocence: for tho' pure and unbiass'd reason be not only a clear light, but also a sure guide, yet must it be far short of the guidance of that Spirit, who was sent to lead us into all truth. But then the graces, the influences of that holy Spirit, which were to reinstate us in our hopes and expectation, of recovering that Paradise we had lost, must be the effects of our Saviour's intercession for us: which is prov'd both from the holy Psalmist in that prophetic Psalm of the exaltation of the Ark, I mean the lxxviii. 18. where he tells us, that *he* not only *ascended up on high, and led captivity captive*, but also that *he receiv'd*; i. e. Interceding, obtain'd and receiv'd of the Father, *gifts for men*: And also from our

Saviour himself, who John xiv. not only tells his disciples, *He must go to the Father*, but at the 16th verse, *that he will pray the Father, and he shall give them another Comforter.*

Since therefore without our Saviour's intercession, there could have been no Spirit to renew and strengthen us; without his reconciliation first made and perfected, there could have been no intercessor for us admitted; without his ascension no reconciliation made: We must look upon the glorious triumph of this day, as the substance of all those valuable blessings in the gospel, which are either necessary for, or advantageous to us. Great was the mercy, and yet as great the advantage on our side, when our Saviour thought fit to exalt humanity to the highest heavens, and instead thereof send divinity again to dwell with us upon earth.

The miraculous Improvements of human nature by the descent of this Spirit, may sufficiently appear from the apostles, who being ignorant unlearn'd fishermen, upon the descent of it were presently inspir'd with a zeal as bright and ardent, but yet as innocent, as were those lambent flames which were the visible conveyance of it. So manifest, so prodigious were these Improvements, that *Paul* and *Barnabas* in the opinion of some, were exalted above
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the pitch of humanity, and were judged worthy of an Adoration !

But not to insist now either upon those miraculous *χαρίσματα* granted then to the apostles, nor yet upon those ordinary *χάρις*, those sweet Influences of this holy Spirit granted to every Christian for his assistance ; I shall conclude all with a brief and general consideration of such effects as this doctrine ought to have upon us.

And did our Saviour therefore exalt our human nature, that he might in exchange thereof send down unto us this divine Comforter ? Let us then, as in gratitude we are bound, so return this love of our Saviour, by *setting our affections on things that are above*, that we may continually in heart and mind ascend thither, and at last in body too, whither the Captain of our Salvation is gone before us. The life of glory, which we expect hereafter, is certainly no more but the improvement of this life of grace, into a perfect, consummate and uninterrupted state of happiness. Every perfect and good Christian doth enjoy some light anticipations of the beatific vision, even upon earth ; we see here, the only difference is, we now see darkly and thro' a glass, we shall then see face to face. Wherefore the Christian life ought to be a continual ascension, a *Πτεροφυγίσις*, a winging of the soul, as the *Platonists* express it, when every degree of holiness

linefs perfected, makes us approach nearer to, and renders us more capable of, even that inaccessible light ; for our Saviour himself hath assured us, *that the pure in spirit shall see God.*

In a word, it must be like *Jacob's* ladder, whose top was fix'd in heaven, to which we must ascend *gradatim*, step by step, rising from one virtue, from one perfection to another. The officious angels then representing to us, the graces of this good spirit, which therefore descend upon us, that they may assist and ascend up with us, till at last we arrive at, and are receiv'd into those mansions, which the Son of God is now gone up before to prepare for us.





S E R M O N XXVI.

COLOSS. iii. 2.

Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth.



THESE Words are a plain Instruction given us by the apostle, and therefore not wanting much critical exposition; I shall only consider from them,

I. What it is to set our affection on things above.

II. What the reasons are why we ought to do so.

I. *What it is to set our affections on things above.*

The Original is τὰ ἄνω φρονεῖτε, translated by the vulgar latin, *quæ sursum sunt sapite*, which

which implies our having a relish for, a delightful and pleasant taste of the things that are above, and therefore well render'd by the english, *to set our affections on them*, for affection signifies such an apprehension of the excellency, worth, dignity or convenience of any thing, as makes us eagerly pursue, and with all the endeavours we can use, covet and desire the enjoyment of it. The appetite cannot move but as 'tis led by such a knowledge, as entertains and excites to the desire of the object: *Ignoti nulla cupido* is an antient maxim amongst the moralists, we cannot have a desire or affection for what we know nothing of, and therefore the understanding must move the will, if we intend to act like what we think our selves, *i. e.* reasonable creatures.

Rightly therefore to set our affection on things above; we must first know what the *τα ἄνω*, the things above are; now the terms being plainly relative do shew us, that this knowledge must be acquir'd by comparison. And we see plainly, though we have not possibly a full comprehension of all of them, that there are things below us. The vegetable and sensitive world are, we see, given into the power and dominion of Man, the fowls of the air, the fish of the sea, the beasts of the field, the fruits of the earth, and all the product of this sensible material world

world, are given we see for man's use, and perish with the using ; this discovers to us that they are of a transitory nature, and therefore no further valuable than as they are serviceable.

Tho' therefore our affections for them are very strong and eager, because we carry about us the same vegetable and sensitive man, the decays of which must be repair'd by the use of them, yet the necessary repetitions of these services shew us, that the enjoyment of them is as transitory as is their nature. These therefore we may easily discover to be below us, they are within our power, under our dominion, and the transient satisfactions we receive from them, are abundantly sufficient to convince us, that the enjoyment of these goods, reaches no further, than to satisfy that part of us which is of kin to them, the animal and sensitive life ; and even where we find the greatest affluence and fullest enjoyment of them, yet even there we find anxieties and desires, appetites and capacities, which they may be apt to stupify and suppress, but can never fill or satisfy.

When king *Solomon* had run through all the boundless variety of pleasures, the sensitive and material world could afford ; yet upon a serious survey of all of them, he had wisdom enough left him to pronounce them all vanity and vexation of spirit. There
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is therefore even in our own nature, something that is above, something that is superior to the transitory beings and delights of the material world : we find in our selves capacities of larger size, such as look for more solid, substantial and lasting entertainments. The observation of the gradations of natural beings does plainly lead us into this ; for the vegetable world is put under the power of the sensitive, and both of them given into the dominion of man ; there must be therefore some more excellent end which the nature of man ought to aim at, in the use of these subservient means, than is the bare use of them. *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we dye*, can no more be the thoughts of a man who acts upon reasonable principles, than it ought to be of a Christian ; for the dominion we find in our selves, the superiority we have over the lower world, will easily cause us to reflect so far upon our selves, as may make us discover, it is not attainable by any virtue or power of our own : We find indeed faculties in our selves capable of contrivance, and management, but we can no more suppose our selves the authors of them, than we can suppose our selves the author of our own being : We find them naturally lead us to the consideration of rule and order, justice and equity ; and from hence arises a pleasure and satisfaction, which is perfectly

perfectly inward and incorporeal, not decaying and transitory, but such as leaves a lasting complacency upon the mind, and sufficiently convinces it, that this alone is capable of being improv'd into an Immortality.

And when we are got thus far into the spiritual nature, when we are able to discover in our selves a comprehensive principle both of knowledge and action, we then begin to feel our desires enlarge upon us, the mean employments of the body can no further solicit or engage us, than the common necessity or convenience of nature requires, but all our care and solicitude begins to turn its self upon the beauteous prospect of an improv'd mind ; the delights of knowledge do pleasantly entertain us, and every advancement only makes us more eager to proceed further ; the satisfactions of virtue or knowledge brought into a conformable practice, give us a settled peace and continual entertainment within our selves ; we see delights continually improving, or at least capable of being improv'd by us, knowledge improving virtue, and virtue encreasing knowledge, and by every act of either, we find still the soul growing more vigorous and active, richer in knowledge, stronger in practice, till we are at last by pleasant gradations led into such a beauteous prospect, as does
sufficiently

sufficiently convince us, that they are the pleasures of the mind alone, which are able to give us an immortal satisfaction.

Thus far therefore does even the natural consideration of the superior nature, that which lies level with our selves, the immaterial and immortal part in us, lead us, towards setting our affections upon it, rather than the lower appetites and desires of the body, because the pleasures of the one, are momentous, transitory, ungovernable and unsatisfactory; the other, lasting, substantial, calm and even, and such as lead us directly to the hopes of immortality.

And here the scene begins to open further, and discover to us a still more beautiful and affecting prospect, for if the comparison of our own nature, with that which is below us, does shew us, that the necessary delights and enjoyments of nature are but transitory, mean and low, when compar'd with the moral beauties and perfections of the mind; the contemplation of these will necessarily lead us to a farther enquiry, for tho' we find our intellectual nature superiour to all the different ranks and kinds of sensible and material being; yet are we far from finding it to be self-sufficient. The confinement of our faculties shews us, we are under limitation still, and our wants and desires convince us, we
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are subordinate and depending Creatures.

This then ought to lead us into the consideration of that nature which is superiour to us, and when it does so, at whatever height and distance we may think our selves plac'd above the material world ; we shall be sure upon such a view to find our selves in the lowest rank of intellectual beings. And though our limited comprehensions cannot reach a full, clear and distinct view, of all the glories of the spiritual world, for indeed the sphere both of our knowledge and action, is so very narrow, that we cannot fully compass even all that is below us ; yet are we capable of apprehending so much, as is sufficient to excite and stir up in us, the strongest appetites and desires of the soul, and make us long for, and endeavour after, a nearer and closer enjoyment of them. The contemplation of our own being, even in the most beauteous and perfect part of it, will shew us, we are far short of utmost perfection ; the unbounded capacity of our thoughts, and the infinite and unlimited desires of the will, shew us what enlargements an intellectual nature is capable of, if it were not clog'd and hinder'd by an earthly and material principle ; and therefore that a pure mind, Spirit or intellect, is superiour to us, and

of greater excellency of nature than we are; these gradations, these distinguishable differences of nature, when we are led step by step, from one perfection to another; are an evident demonstration, that we must at last be terminated somewhere, and that there is something that must be the utmost Perfection.

Now the station we are plac'd in, which is as it were upon the confines of the two worlds, for we partake both of the material and the spiritual world, gives us this advantage, that we can easily discover, tho' we are not perhaps, always as able to assert, the superiority of the spiritual nature; and therefore whatever that is, which is the utmost perfection, must be pure mind and spirit. This is a natural deduction, which plainly and demonstrably leads us, to the being and existence of a God; for that term in this consideration of it, offers to us the whole compass or possibility of perfection: This is that argument, the Patriarchs of old made use of; there was then no written revelation to inform them of the being of their Creator, but the stupendous works of nature, the consideration and meditation of the several subordinations of perfection, discoverable in them, led them by easy steps into the belief of something that was of highest perfection.

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This is that argument, which St Paul tells us, left the rest of the heathen world afterwards without excuse, for thus he tells us, Rom. i. 19, 20. *That which may be known of God, is manifest in them; for the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead;* and if we knew no more than only his power in creating us, his Godhead or superiority over us, which is a natural consequence of his creating us, it were enough to engage our duty and affections; and when we thus knew God, to make us thankful and to glorify him as God.

But when we are led by a supernatural Light, into the fullest manifestation of this being, our weak faculties are capable of receiving; when such mysteries as have been hid from ages and generations, are reveal'd to us; we ought then certainly to find our affections under the strongest and most engaging obligations: For if our natural light will evidently convince us, that there is a God, it ought certainly at the same time to make us thankful for, and very desirous of, such a knowledge, as is able to inform us what he is; and therefore natural religion ought be like a preface or preliminary discourse to a large

volume or treatise, which whilst it gives us only a short and summary account of the author's design, does at the same time give us the greater eagerness and uneasiness, till we have gone through it.

And therefore those who have of late endeavour'd to make an opposition between natural and reveal'd religion, and set them forth as contradistinguish'd truths, that must clash and fight with one another, are in my opinion the truest Atheists ; for I do not see what other aim they can have, than that the world should believe neither. But when natural light has its due effect, and is subservient to the openings and manifestations of revelation, when *the law comes by Moses, and grace and truth by Jesus Christ* ; we then begin to discover such a scene of affairs, as is sufficient to engage the strongest of our affections, and make us earnestly desire and covet after the enjoyment of them. For if the beauty of the natural world is such, the vast variety, the magnificent appearance and structure of it so great, as to make us admire and adore the wise Author and Contriver of it ; to see, to own and to confess, an infinite superiority of nature above us ; such a Power, and such a Majesty, as our weakness can neither comprehend, nor indeed approach : What addition

dition must it give to our affections and desires, when we find this incomprehensible Being, condescending to submit himself to our capacities, by enlarging them, and in some measure unveiling of himself, by revealing himself to us under the characters of love and kindness, mercy and goodness, and all the winning and attractive beauties of an unexpected and undeserved Benefactor! For in his reveal'd will, we see him, not only as a Creator by his Power, a Preserver by his Providence, but as a Redeemer too by his deep and unfathomable love to mankind.

The divine Philanthropy, or God's love to mankind, was the only motive could prevail with him, to give us the knowledge of this salvation, we had sinn'd our selves into that condition, that we neither knew we wanted, nor indeed desired nor deserv'd a Redeemer; and therefore that discovery of himself, which he made to us, when he sent his Son into the world, to be a propitiation for us; as it was wholly unexpected and undeserv'd, so ought it to be the more welcome and affecting: And indeed it is such, as opens to us the whole counsel of Heaven for the salvation of man, shews us all the several parts and dispensations undertaken for us, by the ever blessed and glorious Trinity of Persons,

sons, in the One and undivided Nature of the Godhead.

¶ We see there the free and gracious kindness of God the Father, in sending his Son into the world, the infinite and inestimable benefits of God our Redeemer, in giving himself up a sacrifice for us, the valuable comforts of God our Justifier in sending his grace amongst us, and all these only for the benefit and advantage of his creatures : These are then the *τὰ ἄνω*, things that are indeed above us, such as could not enter into the heart of man to conceive, yet such as he has provided for us because he lov'd us : These things are well worth the best employment of our understandings ; the more we know of them the more we shall desire to know further ; and when the object is infinite as we are sure it is here, we may proceed on to an infinite and immortal satisfaction. To set our Affections therefore on those things can signify no more, than our utmost endeavours to compass as large and comprehensive a knowledge of them as we can ; and the more we know them, the more will our affections be engag'd towards them, the more we shall desire the enjoyment of them. And,



II. The

II. The Reasons of this may be taken.

1st. From the excellency of them. *We ought to set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth*; because the Things above are more excellent.

Now Excellence implies the preference of one thing to another upon some valuable account, and that the value of any thing gives us a greater esteem for it, is evident from those very distinguishable respects we have even for these earthly and perishing goods; for what is it that makes a vein of gold more desirable than its neighbour earth? What is it gives the diamond a lustre, beyond another rock? Why is the pearl preserv'd, when its mother shell is neglected and thrown away, but only for that value and esteem which we our selves have put upon them? But when the things above become the objects of our desires and affections, if these affections be fix'd as they ought to be, upon a full knowledge and understanding of them, we shall find a real and intrinsick value in them; we shall find them not only pleasant and delightful, but useful and advantageous too; we shall find the pleasures of them able to excite the most eager of our desires, and the satisfactions arising from them suffici-

ent to fill the largest of our appetites ; and what adds most to the excellency of them, they are as lasting, as they are great and full ; for what we are assur'd will fully answer our expectation, in the enjoyment of it, and never leave us under the dissatisfaction of a disappointment, is that alone which has a true and real excellency, sufficient of it self to raise our affections and satisfy them too.

These earthly things, even the best of them, however excellent and valuable in themselves, are but uncertain goods, momentary, transitory, subject to varieties, changes and misfortunes, they may either perish with the using, waste and decay with time, or thieves may break in and steal them from us, and then the disappointment, the uneasiness we find for the want of them, is usually greater than all the comfort and satisfaction we had in the enjoyment of them. But when our treasure is laid up in heaven, we have a stock that is inexhaustible ; neither moth nor rust, nor thieves can give us any apprehension, but a divine love and charity will fix our most ardent affections upon the joys of that place ; and the graces of God will give us such a faith, as will strengthen and support our hopes of enjoying them : Thus therefore is it that we
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must believe our Saviour, who told *Martha* when she was busied about many things, *that there is but one thing really valuable, and therefore must we with Mary, covet earnestly that better part.*

2dly, Another Reason for setting our affections on things above, may be taken from the usefulness of doing it; *'tis useful and advantageous for us to do it*, and that upon many accounts. As

First, By setting our affections on things above, we do the most easily wean ourselves from the cares and pleasures of this world, the mischief of those is evident enough; most of us are apter to confess, than to avoid it, worldly care in that extrem of it which is evil, gives us so full an employment, that we never think of any other end, than how to satisfy these uneasy desires our covetous appetites excite in us. And this, when we come to die, when we find we must part with all those satisfactions and enjoyments, we have all our life time been caressing and embracing, fills us with anxieties and fears, confusions and distractions: Our affections are so deprav'd they cannot fix themselves upon a better object, and that they have embrac'd they find must give them a disappointment; for they cannot carry their wealth along with them, and have not
laid

laid up any treasures in Heaven, and therefore find they must go as naked into another world, as they came into this. But when our affections have been long and well fix'd upon the Things that are above, the strength of the inclination helps to abate the eagerness of worldly cares; because we know we have a better abode to provide for, than this on earth, and the keeping our view steady and constant upon that does, at last convince us that this life ought to be no more than our journey to Heaven. Whatever therefore, either the necessity or convenience of nature may require from us; whatever may be expected, either as duty to our selves, to our family or to posterity, will be easily and with a calm temper submitted to the directions of a wise Providence, and we shall easily learn to use the means it does afford us, as subservient to our great end; and he who thus uses this world, will be sure to find the easiest passage into another; for that death can never be unwelcome, which draws the distant prospect, he has all his life time been labouring after, to a nearer view.

Again, The man of pleasure who has wasted his time, his wealth and strength, in luxury and riot, who never gave his soul the satisfaction of one spiritual enjoyment, will find himself under a terrible disap-

disappointment, when age shall force him to confess as old *Barzillai* did to King *David*, *can I discern between good and evil, can I taste what I eat or what I drink, can I hear any more the voice of singing men or singing women?* 2 Sam. xix.

35. For then he will too late find the senseless and stupid condition of his soul; the faculties of it grown as languid and effete, as are those of his aged and diseas'd Body. Whereas had he rightly set his affections on the pleasures above, for at God's right hand there are pleasures for evermore, it would have taught him to have check'd and curb'd the unruly motions, and intemperate passions of the lower appetite; it would have kept his soul awake, and secur'd to her that dominion, that rule and power, which was at first given her over the lower faculties; and have so taught him to have us'd the enjoyments of this life, as not to have forfeited for them the enjoyments of another.

But 2dly, *The setting our affections on things above*, becomes useful and advantageous to us, not only as it is a guard upon our souls against evil, but as it is the best Improvement of our souls in virtue and goodness.

Virtue is we know a habit, and therefore must be acquir'd by gradual Improvements,

ments; it is too bold and arrogant to expect an immediately inspir'd piety; we must be train'd up in the rules of virtue and the ways of God; it must begin in a well order'd disposition, and must be carry'd on and confirm'd by continual acts of the same kind, till the soul is moulded into such a frame, that it becomes uneasy, and out of course and order, when it is not proceeding in that method. Now there cannot be a better way of compassing this, than by keeping our souls continually fix'd and intent upon the great end of their Being; for when our affections are set there, when we let our souls see the great happiness design'd for them, the grand aim they must endeavour after; it keeps them steady and constant, active and vigorous, uniform and agreeable in all their actions; the pomps and vanities of the world will not be able to distract and divert them; the sinful lusts of the flesh cannot cajole and cheat them; because they see not only a more delightful and pleasant end of all their labour and travail, but find also the sweet influences of heaven, the grace of God continually deriv'd upon them, to help and strengthen and quicken their proceedings; *for if any man love me, says our Saviour, that is, does*
rightly

rightly set his affections on me, my Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him. Thus must we proceed from grace to grace, till at last we arrive at the fulness of the measure of the stature of Christ.

If then things above, are in themselves thus aimable, thus much more desirable than any other thing whatever ; if they are in their own nature the most excellent, such as can alone shew us what true perfection is, such as alone have a real and intrinsic value in themselves ; if to set our affections on them, be thus truly useful and advantageous to us ; what better arguments and motives can we have to fix our conversation in Heaven ? From whence also we *expect the Saviour*, the Lord Jesus Christ, *that at his appearance we may be like him, and be able to see him as he is.*

To conclude, If what has been said, may be sufficient to regulate our affections, to place them right, and teach us to *love the Lord our God, with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind*, let it teach us also that the second Commandment is like unto it, *we must love our neighbour as our selves.* The opportunity now offers us a fair occasion for the
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tryal of it, if we are sensible of the beneficence of our great and good Creator; let us endeavour in some measure to return his bounty by our own kindness to his indigent and necessitous creatures, for these he makes the proxies of his love; this he takes as done to himself, *inasmuch as ye do it to one of the meanest of my brethren, ye do it unto me; and he that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord, and look what he so layeth out, shall surely be paid him again; for blessed is he that considereth the poor and needy, the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble.*

But besides these common topicks, taken from the nature of humanity and compassion for the distresses of our brethren, which are affections intimately immix'd and interwoven with our nature, as likewise from the inviting and alluring kindness of divine promises and rewards for the performance of it; we have at present a more extraordinary motive to it, the duty and respect we owe to the recommendation of our superiors. You have heard the royal exhortation to our immediate superiors both in the civil and the sacred polity. The example of the royal bounty is set before you as a pattern, and every one is left to follow it as God enables and disposes him: For though it does come later than
usual

usual to us, and the mildness of the season may not seem to require the pressing of it so much, yet there is even in that circumstance a motive which ought to be of some moment and weight with us. For you who are acquainted with the annual labours of the poor, know this to be a season, when the expence and want of employment in the winter must have exhausted, what their industry in the summer could have provided against those necessities, and yet the full employment of their callings is not yet return'd upon them, and therefore the kindness of a relief now, is not only very necessary but very seasonable.

Further, yet there is one motive very convenient to be urg'd to you, the care and disposition of this annual charity is put into the hands of such honourable persons that as if they were, as indeed they are, the ministers of God to you in this service, you find the promises of our Saviour even literally fulfill'd to you of this place, by a double, triple, quadruple return into your bosom, and therefore may be well encourag'd to follow the advice of our Saviour, *give and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, heaped up, and running over, shall men give into your bosom, for look what measure*

sure you mete withal, it shall be measured unto you again.

And lastly, besides all these selfish motives, the honour of the action rebounds upon and engages God Almighty. For the administration of this service, not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God.



SER.



SERMON XXVII.

LUKE xxi. 28.

And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your Redemption draweth nigh.



THAT there was to be a double Advent or coming of the Messias, and these two so very different ; one of them to be in grief, sorrow and humility, the other of them in glory, majesty and power, is so evident from all the prophetical Predictions of his coming, that the Jews thinking them incompatible with the same person, run into that fatal error of two Messiaesses to come ; one of them of the Tribe of *Ephraim* the Son of *Joseph*, who was to come in all humility to suffer and to die ; the other of the Tribe of *Judah* the Son of *David*, who was to come in glory to govern and to judge.

The first of these, after a long and tedious war with his Enemies, not being able to compleat his victories, was to suffer under them, but however by his sufferings, was to gain this advantage, that he should open a more easy way to the second Messias, who was by a total defeat of all the enemies of the Jews, again to set up a glorious scepter in *Judah*. Thus did they, being blinded by their carnality, which would not let them look beyond the felicity of an earthly *Canaan*, dream away all those spiritual advantages which they might have really enjoy'd under their Messias, and mistook the kingdom of God, for the kingdom of Man.

But praised be the Lord, who hath opened our eyes, and sent his Son into the world to be a light to lighten us *Gentiles*, when his own People the *Jews* had refused him to be their glory. For we are taught that the first coming of the Messias in humility, his very sufferings and death, gain'd a glorious victory for us, and to himself that everlasting kingdom, where he is to reign in all glory, majesty and power to all eternity.

But because this seems to be a time, particularly set apart for Considerations of this nature, I shall endeavour as clearly as I can, to state the true notion of both these Advents.

The

The Explication of which, will lead us to a fuller view, and plainer understanding of the words before us.

And first, of the first Advent or coming of the Messias in humility.

I. If we consider the Person of the Messias, who was the eternal Son of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal to God; it may seem a wonderful thing indeed to us, that he should submit himself to such a state of humility and inanition, that he should empty himself of all the glory and majesty of heaven, to take upon him the frailties and the infirmities of man. But when we consider the end or design of this his humiliation, how shall we enough admire the exceeding great goodness of God, who condescended so far, for us miserable wretches, as to take upon him our likeness, that we might become capable of his. Himself to become the Son of Man, that he might adopt us into the Sons of God!

However great the condescension of that divine Person was, who came down amongst us, yet was it to bestow greater benefits upon man, and make our exaltation the higher; his coming in humility was to us the cause of Glory: Wherefore as much is it our duty, and we shall find it our interest too, especially at this time, grate-

fully to recollect what he suffer'd in the perfecting that design for which he came amongst us, *viz.* in retrieving our lost estate, and resettling us in such a condition, wherein it is easy for us, if we will, to obtain salvation.

And for this purpose we need not look any farther than that short Compendium of our Faith the Creed, where we find the third, fourth and fifth Articles, will give us an account of his first Advent or Coming in humility, the seventh, of his second Advent or Coming in Glory. Where, tho' in that short form of words which we call the Apostles Creed, as they are now deliver'd to us, neither of these dispensations are particularly specified to us by this title of Advent; yet do we find it in some of the more ancient copies, as in that of *Irenæus*, *Lib. 1. c. 2.* where we find his Advent express'd, as well before the Nativity, as before his second coming, and so *Justin Martyr*, when he adds the Word *παλιν*.

Again, the Article of his second coming, sufficiently intimates the Incarnation, and that dispensation of humility which succeed-ed it, to have been the first Advent.

Thus again, in the Creed commonly attributed to the *Nicene* Council, this double Advent is evidently distinguished; his first coming in humility in these Words,
who

who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven. His second in Justin Martyr's Phrase, and he shall come again in glory to judge both the quick and the dead. Thus do we find in our very Creed, a double account of our Saviour's Advent, one of them already past, his coming in humility; the other to come, but promis'd in those words, *He shall come again in glory to judge, &c.*

A full account of the first Advent, and a clear discussion of those weighty particulars which are contain'd in it, require a larger discourse, than either the present time or the design'd brevity will admit: It shall be sufficient therefore, since the nature of that Advent cannot be either unknown or obscure to any Christian, only to name them to you.

And first as to the Incarnation, our Creed will teach us to believe, that our Saviour, who was and is truly God, came into the world for our sakes, and did become really Man, or as St. *John* expresseth it, the Word; that is, the second Person of the blessed Trinity became Fiesh; that is, did truly assume the human Nature: And for a farther evidence of this, though he was conceiv'd by the Holy Ghost, yet was he after the manner of other men, born of the Virgin *Mary*: and as a farther manifestation of the truth of his hu-

man Nature, he hath left it recorded to us in his gospel, that he was a child, and as other children do, did grow in wisdom and stature, one of them, referring to the natural powers of his human soul, the other to those of his body. And as the consequence of this Incarnation, or the reason why human nature was assumed, succeeds his Passion, *he was* (as himself tells us) *a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*; he had long in the midst of divine Majesty suffer'd the contradiction of sinners, and when Humanity was assum'd, he particularly underwent all the slights, indignities and affronts, that were put upon him by his own people. Furthermore, he was tempted above whatever man was, he suffer'd the afflictions of hunger and thirst, he was expos'd not only to the rage of his own countrymen, but also to the fury of wild beasts, for he was forty days and forty nights in the wilderness; and assures us at other times too, *that the Son of Man had not where to lay his head*. He suffer'd an agony more terrible than ever man suffer'd, and those precious drops of bloody sweat, which in that agony did distill from his body, did as evidently demonstrate the truth of his Humanity, as the reality of his affliction. And to crown all these sorrows, and perfect his humility, he did at last submit his sacred body to the

the cruel shame, as well as bitter pains of the Cross.

This is that Advent or coming of the Messias in humility, wherein he took upon him, not only the weakness, the infirmity of human nature, but did also himself, being an innocent and spotless person, undertake for and pay that price of sin, which all human nature without him could never have been able to have done ; for which he is now set down at the right hand of glory, having all things put under his feet, and he himself given to be head over all things, to his Church. Which leads us to the second Consideration of the Advent or coming of the Messias, that of his coming in glory to rule and to judge.

II. It was the great expectation of the world before the Incarnation, to see the Messias come in the Flesh; the restitution and reinstatement of fall'n nature, was what was earnestly long'd for, especially in the *Jewish* world, to whom chiefly the Oracles were committed, the promises were given. Thus old *Simeon*, when he met our Saviour in the Temple, desires to be dissolv'd in peace, because *his eyes had seen that salvation*. But after that œconomy or dispensation of humility and inanition was finish'd, when our Saviour ascended up into heaven, again to take possession

of that kingdom which the Father had given unto him, we are promis'd a more glorious coming, a more majestick presence. As the angels told the apostles and other disciples, who stood amaz'd and wondring at his glorious ascension, as we find it, *Acts* i. 11. *Ye men of Galilee, why stand you gazing into Heaven? This Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as ye have seen him go into heaven.*

This is that second Advent or coming of the Messias, as earnestly look'd for by the Christian world, as was the former by the Jewish. *When the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout and with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first, then shall they which live and remain, be caught up with him also in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and shall ever be with the Lord, as the Apostle describes the Majestick Presence of that day.* 1 Thes. iv. 16. 17.

Now what the purpose, what the end and design of all this glorious appearance shall be, is taught us, as I before told you, in the 7th article of our Creed, *He shall thus, and in this manner come again to judge both the quick and the dead.* As we find in this description of the apostle, both those who are already dead, and those who shall be found alive summon'd

mon'd and conven'd before him, as is plainly intimated to us by the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, the dreadful *Præcones* or *Cryers* of that Court; so must they when summon'd, give up to him the Almighty Judge, an account of their whole lives, and according to their demeanour here, be then finally determined either to eternal reward or punishment. Then shall he who was despis'd in his humility, when reveal'd in glory, become terrible to those, who have either in his own person, or in his servants, mock'd or despis'd him: then shall the wicked and unprofitable servant, by a more just and righteous Judgment than he met with upon earth, be cast into utter darkness, whilst that the faithful stewards of his bounty shall with all mercy and loving kindness be receiv'd into his Glory.

Thus have I given you an account of the two Advents of our Saviour, one in humility, which is already past, the other in glory, which is yet to come; and as the first of these Advents, his coming in humility, was not only accompanied with strange signs in heaven, as the wonderful appearances of angels at his birth, and that more wonderful appearance of a new star to the wise men of the east; but also foretold and foresignified to the world, as well by all the Prophets, as by those sundry anticipations

tions of the Incarnation, (if we may so call them) which we meet with so frequently in the old Testament, especially when we find any signal deliverance or redemption of his people, such as were that of his appearance to *Abraham* before the destruction of *Sodom* and deliverance of *Lot* from thence, his wrestling with *Jacob* at *Peniel*, so called because *Jacob* is said there to have seen God face to face, before his deliverance from his brother *Esau* : and his appearance to *Moses* again, before his deliverance of the children of *Israel* from the bondage of *Egypt* ; which sundry deliverances, as they are all Types of that great Redemption which he was once to bring to all mankind ; so are these several appearances, types or figures of that human nature which he was once for all in the fulness of time to assume, and in which he was finally to perfect and compleat the Redemption of man, from the captivity of sin and satan. As it was I say in the first Advent, so shall it be in his second coming also. He shall not only at the last day come in the clouds with power and great glory, as we are told in the verse immediately preceeding our text, but being now set down at the right hand of God, the glorious Head and Ruler of his Church, as well as Judge of all men, he does upon emergent and
extraor-

extraordinary occasions, though not visibly and in the nature of man, as he shall then, yet by his divine power, appear in judgment against his enemies, and for the Redemption of his people. Such is the Redemption here spoke of in the text by St. *Luke* xxi. 28.

For tho' the sum of this chapter be usually expounded of the great and last day of judgment, to which certainly too it hath a reference, yet it is plain, that our Saviour spoke it more immediately of his coming in Judgment, to visit the obdurate and rebellious *Jews*, and for the deliverance of his Church, from those troubles and persecutions it suffer'd under them, as may appear from the very rise of this discourse, which is taken from his disciples admiring the beauty and glory of the Temple, as we see in the 5th verse of this chapter. And this indeed is the usual tenour of all the sacred prophecies, which do besides the thing they immediately foretel, at the same time intend something at a greater distance.

Our Saviour therefore, to whom after his Ascension, the kingdom is granted by his Father, having ascertain'd his followers of his second coming unto them, and that to be in Judgment, to bear and buoy them up amidst those dangers and difficulties they were to undergo, he assures them

them also, that though the final Judgment should not be determined 'till the last day ; yet would he often visit them in particular judgments, for their Redemption from such enemies as might in the eyes of man be almost ready to swallow them up. And for their further assurance and encouragement, our Saviour doth in this chapter, give them certain evident signs and tokens of the approach of such his deliverance ; such as are wars and seditions, earthquakes in diverse places, famine and pestilence, persecutions and oppressions of the righteous and faithful, for they must never look for their portion in this life ; and all these in such a terrible manner, *that mens hearts shall even fail them for fear, and the very Powers of heaven shall be shaken, but then doth the Son of Man come ;* then doth our Saviour bid us, *look up, and lift up our heads for our Redemption draweth near.*

Having thus describ'd the nature of our Saviour's Advent, both his first and second Coming, I shall deduce some useful corollaries from this text, and so conclude. As first,

1st. When troubles and afflictions surround us, these certain signs and fore-runners of God's coming in Judgment against his enemies, and for the deliverance of his people, we should then *look up and lift up*

up our heads, for our Redemption draweth near. i. e. We must not either be so much dejected, as to suffer our selves to sink into a base despair, through the severity of them ; nor yet let our spirits fall so low as to be baffled into any mean and unworthy compliance with any thing that is unbecoming the innocence or the integrity of our Religion ; but stedfastly look up to heaven from whence alone we are to expect our help, and rely upon God only, who will certainly in his good time bring a deliverance unto us.

We have two signal instances of this nature recorded upon story, when Christianity was brought so very low, that in all outward appearance nothing less than Almighty power and goodness, could have rescu'd and retriev'd it from utter ruin. The first is, that miraculous deliverance of the Christians in the destruction of *Jerusalem*, where they being as it were but an handful of men, had not only the *Romans* without, but the *Jews* within the city also, both bitter and inveterate enemies ; where though this ruin did equally threaten both the Jew and Christian, yet was this Scourge prepar'd for those only who had most barbarously crucified the Lord of Life, and obstinately refus'd the most tender offers of salvation : For the *Romans*, by a wonderful

derful Providence, even in the height of a prosperous siege, retreated as if it had been on purpose to afford the Christians a secure escape, who remembering the predictions given them by our Saviour in this chapter, and being further forewarn'd of the ensuing danger, as some Authors tell us, by the fresh advice of an Angel from heaven, took this opportunity and so escap'd that snare; and were no sooner retir'd in safety, but saw the enemy return with doubled fury, to the utter destruction of the *Jewish* Nation. Thus did God Almighty in this great streight of affairs, not only give his people a security from danger, but did also for ever free them from one of the most formidable enemies Christianity had to deal withal; for after this, they were no further troubled to combat the obstinacy of Judaism, and there was nothing left them now to conquer, but only the foolish superstition of the Pagans.

And the second instance of the danger and delivery of Christianity I shall give you, is from those enemies: For when the Christian religion, had notwithstanding all the persecutions and oppressions of the heathen world, by the purity, innocence and integrity, which it not only profess'd but practis'd, made a great progress

gress in the world, so that as *Tertullian* saith, *the heathen Temples begun now to be very thin and empty*. The devil did as the last effort of his weak malice, set his Instrument *Dioclesian*, that madman in power, upon a piece of cruelty which did equal at least, if not outgo, all that ever his predecessors had before attempted. He does not only, as the former Tyrants had done, pick out here and there an eminent Christian for the slaughter, but strikes universally at the whole Religion; he murders some, banishes others, destroys all their Churches at once, burns all their books, and sets his malice chiefly against the holy Scriptures; invents engines to compel those who would not willingly comply with him to sacrifice to his Gods: and to shew the wrathful malice of the man, when he had by these means render'd them incapable of returning any answers, sets the best wits of his own Religion to ridicule theirs. And when he had by these barbarous means, brought Christianity to that pass that it made no open shew or appearance in the world, the weak man thinking himself by these means master of his designs, sets up a triumphal Pillar, with this proud and haughty Inscription, *Nomine Christianorum deleta*, in memory that even the Name of Christians was rooted out of
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the world. Now was it high time for the Almighty to interpose his assistance, when Christianity was brought to that low ebb, that even its most prying enemies, could not find any remains of it. And therefore we find, according to our Saviour's promise in the text, amidst all this trouble and confusion their redemption drawing near. For not many years after it pleas'd the Almighty to set up that glorious Prince, *Constantine the Great*, who not only gave the Christians their peace and liberty, but also restor'd and rebuilt their Churches with greater glory and splendor than before. And that very *Dioclesian*, who thought he had not left one Christian in the world, did live to see almost all the world, except himself, become Christian.

Thus may we assure our selves, that though the malice of the devil, and the iniquity of men, may bring many and great afflictions upon the church of God; yet will he at last come in judgment against them, and bring deliverance unto his people. They may oppress, but they shall never overwhelm it.

2dly. Wherefore the second Corollary I would deduce from hence, is that we still lift our heads; that since it hath pleas'd God Almighty to give us such assurance
for

for our trust in, and reliance upon him, we do amidst the greatest of our troubles and afflictions, take up such a courage, constancy and resolution, as may be worthy of and becoming Christians. That we do not with any querulous temper, any murmuring or repining anxiety, forestall the coming of the Lord ; but rather lay hold of that faithful promise of our Saviour, which he gives at the 16th verse of this Chapter, *That though ye be betrayed of your parents, your brethren, your kinsmen and friends, though some of you be put to death, though all of you be hated for his Name's sake, yet shall not one hair of your head perish, but by your patience possess your souls.* i. e. Though you are compassed about on all sides with many miseries, yet notwithstanding be valiant and courageous, and bear out these things manfully ; and when you find your miseries at the height, then lift up your heads, and be assur'd upon the infallible word of our Saviour, *that when these things come to pass, then is your Redemption drawing near.*

We might add many more, and those signal Instances of God Almighty's providential interposition for the deliverance of his Church, as arguments for our reliance upon, our looking up and lifting up our heads to

him: Such is that never to be forgotten anniversary Thanksgiving, for the Restoration of this Church and State.

But I shall chuse rather to confirm the duty of a submissive dependance upon God's Providence; which was brought to pass by the Almighty arm, without the assistance of the Arm of flesh, even then when they seemed to lie under a total Subversion. By shewing,

1. How necessary and how advantageous Afflictions are to the Church.

2. How great the certainty is even on God's part, that She shall be supported under them.

The first of these is built upon the imperfections of our Nature. The latter, upon the infinite perfections of God Almighty.

When St. Paul tells us, *1 Cor. xi. 19. there must be Heresies, that they which are approv'd, may be made manifest*: He fairly intimates a kind of moral impossibility, that mankind should ever agree in one truth. The shortness of our knowledge, and the unruliness of our affections, according to the several biasses of education, prejudice or interest, engage us in a stiff defence of those opinions which we have espous'd, upon any one or it may be all of these principles. The
haughty

haughty ambition of one, the obstinate ignorance of another, the fordid interest of a third, not only blind their understandings, but pervert their wills also, and lead them captives to their errors.

And these are some of those lusts, from whence, St. James tells us, *proceed wars and fightings*. When we are thus engag'd the contest grows warm, and the engagements of the pen are more bitter, nay oftentimes more fatal than those of the sword. 'Tis a sad recollection to consider what dismal consequences these divisions have engag'd the world in: How have Excommunications flown thick from West to East, and back again from East to West, and thrown the world into such a confusion, that he must be more than an ordinary enquirer, who could tell where to find either truth or charity! These intestine broils, as 'tis the nature of all civil wars, bring severer Calamities upon us, than any foreign enemy, than the worst of Pagan persecutions could do. Here it is that many come in Christ's Name, but we are forbid to follow them. Here it is we are betray'd by parents and brethren, and kinsfolk and friends, the most sacred names on earth, and yet amidst all these calamities our Saviour bids us, in patience possess our Souls. And that indeed

is the great advantage which these calamities do bring to a true Christian; *For tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, experience hope, and that hope maketh not asham'd.* Times of difficulty, are always times of recollection, when we find the pressure sit hard upon us, and the weight of our afflictions greater than our natural infirmities may be able to support; it makes us begin to turn our thoughts upon such an assistance as we think may be able to support us under them: *'Tis good for me* (saith the Psalmist) *that I have been afflicted.* It collects our scatter'd wandring thoughts, and fixes them there, where we can alone expect a full assurance of comfort, in the universal goodness of God, and in his all-sufficient perfections; for tho' the righteous may fall, yet he *shall not utterly be cast down.* And therefore the Psalmist teacheth us again, *not to put our trust in Princes, nor in any child of man, but to say with him, our help standeth in the name of the Lord.* For tho' the Canaanites and Amorites, and all the Heathen may furiously rage, tho' the People may imagine vain things against the Lord, and against his Anointed, yet he that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn,

scorn, the Lord shall have them in derision. Yet hath he set his King upon his holy hill of Sion, and shall give him the Heathen for his Inheritance; and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. Therefore serve the Lord with fear, and rejoyce before him with reverence: Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and so you perish from the right way: Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

The grounds of this assurance, under the good providence of God, depends as I before told you, upon the super-eminent perfections of his nature; his nature is indefectible, not capable of any defection or imperfection whatsoever: And therefore truth being the great perfection of the understanding, his promises must necessarily be indefectibly, *i. e.* infallibly certain: Now his Promises for the support of his Church are very full and large; *Wherever two or three are gathered together in my Name, I will be in the midst of them*; and again by our Saviour, *Lo I am with you even unto the end of the world*: And not only for the continuance of his providence, but for the care and watchfulness of it too, he has assur'd us, *that even the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

Tho' therefore for many great and wise ends of his good Providence, he may often suffer his Church to fall into many grievous calamities and oppressions from wicked men, as we find he did in the purest and most primitive times of it ; yet even then according to the promise of the text, *when these things begin to come to pass, we must then look up and lift up our heads, and believe our redemption is drawing nigh* ; for if the Lord be the God of truth, he cannot suffer his truth to fail.

But there is one consideration more, which highly concerns our selves ; for tho' he cannot fail his sure promise, yet if we are unworthy of it, he may remove his candlestick, and where a people are not worthy of it, he commands his Apostles *to shake off the dust from their feet, and go unto another city*. 'Tis a fearful thing to be deserted of the living God ; to have him in his anger remove that truth from us, which hath met with so cold an entertainment among us, and carry us unto those who are atheists out of ignorance, not out of curiosity.

How does it become us therefore, with whom this sound deposition is intrusted, *to approve our selves in all godly conversation and honesty* ! The pious incense of a faithful
Aaron,

Aaron, could once stop the current of a devouring plague, and we are taught that the prayers of the faithful are still a sweet smelling sacrifice before God. How ought we then to make it the subject of our constant and hearty prayers, that he would be pleas'd to continue the blessing of his truth amongst us ! How ought we to make his reveal'd will, the only object of our study and industry, that we may at least be able so far to comprehend it, as to *instruct the weak, and put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.* For all scripture is given by *Inspiration of God*, as St. Paul, 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. *and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnish'd to all good works.*





SERMON XXVIII.

JOHN i. 14.

And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us.



THE various and wonderful condescensions of divine love for the restitution of fall'n man, are hardly so stupendous in the Miracle, as they are winning and engaging in the kindness of them. For that God should become Man, when we consider him only as an all-powerful Being, may indeed raise in us such an Idea as our shallow comprehensions can never adequately reach ; and yet upon the account of his divine Omnipotence we may have reason enough to believe : But that God should send his Son into the world, *who is God of God, and very God, to become flesh, to dwell amongst us,* and that only to save sinners, a word which comprehends all that can be injurious

injurious to God Almighty ; is such a wonderful account of love, kindness and beneficence in the divine Nature, as must engage, not only to a bare belief, but even an admiration of it ; for that love, if any, must necessarily come unsuspected, which carries no other aim with it, save only our own advantage.

These gracious designs of heaven, when they were once publish'd to the world, did carry along with them so mighty and strong a conviction to all minds that were willing to receive them, that the enemy of mankind has ever since us'd all his industry to elude the force of that argument, the truth of which he was not able to deny, by abusing the shallow reason of mankind, and endeavouring to blunder and confound the revelation of that mysterious piece of divine Love. Thus was this divine oeconomy very early encounter'd both by Jew and Gentile, with all the absurdities of worshipping a malefactor, and all the contumelies of a crucified God. *Trypho, Celsus, Porphyry* and others (as may be seen by the most early Apologists) usd' all their wit and malice, and they had enough of both, to ruin the credit of this heavenly design, and rob mankind of the only means they could have for obtaining salvation ; but this counsel and this work was not of man, and therefore they were
found

found fighters against God. For notwithstanding all the wit, malice, and even power of the adversary, this despis'd doctrine of an incarnate God, and a suffering deliverer, *which was to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness*, grew so mightily, as to gain from the very heathens themselves the title of being the κρατῦσα Δόξα, the prevailing opinion, and prov'd such a stumbling block, as gave the haughty stubbornness of the *Jews* a fall, and such foolishness as convinc'd the wisdom of the *Greek*: *Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men*, 1 Cor. i. 25.

When the devil therefore was thus baffled in the attempts of those who perish'd through unbelief, it might have been reasonably expected, that the kind and merciful undertaking of our great Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus, should have been receiv'd with all the gratitude, supported and maintain'd with all the charity, sincerity and integrity, that so good an Institution, as Christianity is, could possibly inspire human nature withal. But our Saviour himself has taught us the parable of the tares amongst the good seed; and his great Apostle St. Paul has told us, *that there must be heresies that they which are approv'd may be made manifest*. And therefore, when the devil could

could no longer maintain an open war against Christianity, he begins to attack it by pretended Christians, and endeavours covertly to undermine that faith, which he could not openly overthrow. For there is not one article of our Christian Belief, which has any relation to our Saviour's person or office, that has not been severely attack'd by some heretick or other : And therefore this of the incarnation, which is the very foundation of all the rest, might reasonably expect, as it did really meet with, the sharpest of his attempts. And therefore I hope an endeavour to vindicate this great article of faith, will need no apology at this time, when we are about to celebrate the greatest benefit that God Almighty ever did, or could bestow upon mankind. Which I shall do by shewing

I. How the doctrine of the Incarnation is deliver'd to us in scripture.

II. How it has been receiv'd by the Catholick Church, and stands now establish'd in our particular national Church.

III. By shewing the pernicious consequences of such errors, as have been entertain'd concerning it. And

I. How

I. *How the doctrine of the Incarnation is deliver'd to us in scripture.*

The term *Incarnation* being not scriptural, but of ancient ecclesiastical use, it will be necessary first to lay before you the meaning of it, before we proceed to prove that meaning to you from the scripture : By this word therefore has been always understood, the assumption or taking of the whole human nature into an unity of person with the Son of God : So that it lies upon us to prove from scripture these three things.

1. That the nature assuming was divine.
2. That the nature assum'd, was the whole human nature.
3. That the mode of Assumption was into an Unity of Person.

1. And first, that the Nature assuming was divine. The text tells us, *It was the word that became flesh*, and our Evangelist tells us, at the first verse of this chapter, *That the Word was in the beginning, was with God, and was God*. Agreeably to this St. Paul says to Tim. i Epist. iii. 16. *God was manifested in the flesh*. So the same Apostle to his *Philippians* chap. ii. 6. 7. says of Christ, *who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant,*

servant, and was made in the likeness of man. So again, Rom. viii. 3. *God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh:* and St. Matthew interpreting the prophetic name *Immanuel*, says it is *God with us*; and to close all, St. Paul tells us, Rom. ix. 5. *That the Fathers are the Israelites; of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.*

And if these so plain, so positive texts of Scripture, asserting the condescension of a divine Person who came to take our nature upon him, are not yet sufficient, as a confirmation of them, we may add the whole course of his life, which was nothing less than one continu'd series of miracles: He that could forgive sins, and did demonstrate it by a miracle too, on purpose to shew us, *that the Son of Man had power on earth to forgive sins*: He that cast out devils, he that healed the sick with his word only, he that knew the thoughts of mens hearts, he that could command the seas, he that could walk upon the water as upon dry ground, he in short at whose command the whole creation was; for he had not only power upon earth, but could if he had so pleas'd have commanded legions of angels too; he with whom the whole frame both of heaven and earth suffer'd, what could he be less than as the Centurion confess'd him to be, *the Son of God!*

2. The

2. The second thing to be prov'd from scripture is, that this divine person who condescended for our sakes to become flesh, did assume or take upon him the whole or perfect human nature. The text tells us, *he became flesh*, which all Interpreters allow, even our very adversaries, for which see the *Racovian* Catechism, to be a synechdochical expression of the whole nature of man. But to shew them we are not much beholding to them for the concession, St. Paul tells us *Heb. ii. 16. 17. He took not on him the nature of Angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham; wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren. For as children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him, that hath the power of death, verse 14. And so became an high priest for us. Not such an one as cannot be touch'd with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. chap. iv. 15.* Thus does this exalted writer prove, that he who was the Creator of our nature, did take upon him all the nature which he himself created; for sin came into the world by disobedience, and by sin death; and therefore taking upon him our perfect Nature, without those dismal additions of our own corruption, and

and suffering in it, he was able to deliver us both from sin and death.

'Tis needless in so plain and own'd a case, to multiply texts: For if we do but here consider the course of his life too, 'tis as full a demonstration of the truth of his human nature, as human infirmity without sin can give us. For he that was born a child, he that increas'd in wisdom and stature, the one of them referring to the powers of his body, the other to the faculties of his Soul; he that did hunger and thirst, eat and drink, sleep and wake, he that wept and sorrow'd for *Jerusalem*, and in his last agony when his body sweat forth bloody drops, did own his soul to be sorrowful unto death; he, lastly, that suffer'd death; what could he else be but perfect man? For death which is nothing else but a separation of soul and body, does necessarily suppose an antecedent conjunction of them. And therefore this alone is enough to confute that imperfect dream of *Apollinarius* and his followers.

The third and last thing we are to prove from scripture is, that the mode of Assumption is the taking of the human Nature into an unity of person with the Son of God.

The divine nature being one supream entire inseparable and indivisible thing, and all the distinction that can be there conceiv'd,

ceiv'd, arising only from the opposition of relations between the Persons ; we cannot properly say the human nature was taken into an unity of nature with the divine, lest we fall in with those who by an absurd kind of absorption, destroy the human nature in this mystery, or else with those who have as absurdly affirm'd the whole Trinity to be incarnate ; for in the sense of *Nature* the whole Trinity are but One, and therefore if this Unity be not in nature, there is no other unity then conceivable but only this of Person. And yet tho' the Persons be relatively-really distinct from one another, yet the distinction of Person from Nature is only virtual ; and therefore whatever is really united to any divine Person, is as really united to the divine Nature too ; and thus we may avoid either the confounding of the natures, or the Incarnation of the whole Trinity.

This I thought necessary to explain the terms of the assertion. The proof of it therefore from scripture will lie in considering such characters of this unity, as are there given of it, which we shall find to be altogether personal. The text tells us, *it was the Word that became Flesh, or was made Flesh*, but the Word, or this term *Λόγος*, as is I think now agreed upon by most learned men, was us'd by St. *John* to express or denote to us a Person, the Son
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of God, the second Person of the Trinity. Nor was this a peculiarity of our Evangelist, but as might be plentifully prov'd from *Philo* the known language of the Jewish sects, &c. The union therefore of our nature to the divine, being by this text so particularly appropriated to one distinct person in the divine nature, we cannot well conceive how the unity arising from that union, can possibly be any other but personal.

But we are upon this Text encounter'd by *Socinus* himself with a mighty difficulty; he says we do not rightly translate the word ἐγένετο, which in other places of scripture signifies not as we make it here, *factum est, he became or was made*; but only *suit, was*. To stand corrected then by so great a master, let us allow his criticism, and then the text stands thus, *the Word was Flesh*; but then it is but equal we should be allow'd a postulatium in our turn, and therefore must desire of him to believe, as our Evangelist commands him, in the first verse of this chapter, that *the Word was God*; and then I am sure, he must upon his own principles acknowledge, that whoever is God, is a Person. And since the divine persons, as well as nature, are unvariable, incapable of change, I would desire to know, what other sense can possibly be made of those two predications, *the Word was God, the Word was Flesh*, but
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only that the Word remaining still the Word, did assume our nature, not into an unity of nature, (for that's impossible, unless you can suppose the Creator and Creature to be one Nature) but into an unity of person ; so that *He*, the *Word*, the same Person who was God, the Son of God, he the Word, the self same Person, was also Flesh, the Son of Man. This I think upon his own bottom, is a just reasoning against him : But then to retrieve our old translation, we must desire him to consider, the emphatical variety the Evangelist here uses in the two texts. When he affirms, *that the Word was God*, he expresses it by the verb substantive ἦν, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν ὁ θεός, to signify the permanency and eternity of his duration. When he affirms that *the Word was Flesh*, he expresses it by the verb ἐγένετο, which connotes a temporary beginning of something which was not, and therefore is it rightly translated, *he became* or *was made*, what he was not before, *Flesh*, thereby signifying his temporal generation. But this is revealing such a secret, as brings along with it the belief both of a Trinity and Incarnation ; 'tis true indeed, and those I hope are too weighty matters to be baffled by one empty criticism.

I have dwelt the longer upon this text, not only because it is the subject of our present discourse, but also the principal text,
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upon which this fundamental Article is built. If this therefore be sufficiently clear'd, it will be enough now to mention only one or two of the most considerable texts to this purpose to confirm this, and shew the analogy of faith. Thus St Paul *Phil. ii. 6, 7.* says, *that Christ who was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal to God, yet emptied himself, and was found in the likeness of man:* where the only observation I shall make is this, that the relative antecedent which governs both states, both that of his Præexistence in the form of God, and that of his subsequent condition in human nature, being masculine, must necessarily denote a person, and being singular, cannot signify more than one; and therefore the unity must needs be an unity of person: For the natures stand sufficiently distinguish'd by the *μορφή θεῷ*, the form of God, and the *μορφή δούλου*, the form of a servant. Thus *Acts xx. 28.* The Church of God is said *to be purchased with his own blood.* Now that the nature of God, and the nature of blood, are two incompatibles, is too plain a matter to dispute, and therefore it cannot be any otherwise said to be the blood of God, but as it was the blood of that Person who was God; much less could it be said to be his own blood, but as it belong'd to that nature, which was assum'd into an unity of

Person with him who was God; for in-communication is a necessary consequence of personality.

Thus have I endeavour'd as briefly as I could, to state the doctrine of the Incarnation, as deliver'd in scripture. Our next task will be,

II. *To consider, how it has been receiv'd by the Catholick Church, and stands now establish'd in our own.*

The authority of the Church has been so venerable, especially when join'd with an uncontested prescription, as to be thought alone sufficient for the determining any controversy that could arise amongst Christians. Herein is it, that in some of our most antient and best acknowledg'd councils, we have the *τὰ ἀρχαῖα ἔθνη* and the *ἐγὼς οἱ πατέρες*, made the great foundations of their wise determinations. But since the ungrounded pretence of the *Romish* Church for an unknown oral tradition, we have had some too refin'd Christians, who have so far laid aside all the authority of the Church, as to put no greater value upon the sacred determinations of the great Councils of *Nice*, *Ephesus* or *Chalcedon*, than they would upon the additional articles of the Synod of *Trent*; to these therefore, it was necessary to make our ground good, first
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from scripture; and if that be done, I hope a constant recommendation of this great article from the agreeing sentiments of the catholick Church, will not prove either an empty or insignificant argument for it.

To do this as briefly as the present time requires, I can only observe to you, that those determinations of the Church, which have been by some charg'd with novelty and humane Invention, are no more than just explications and fit establishments of that faith which was once deliver'd to the saints, and are indeed in their own nature no otherwise necessary, but as the perverseness of heretical teachers has made them so. Thus when some began very early to deny the truth of Christ's human nature, asserting him to have been in the Flesh, a phantasm only, or that he had only an imaginary Body, others that he had a true Body, but not of human or earthly extraction, but of heavenly original, the Church was as early alarm'd, and shew'd her self vigorously in defence of that truth, which had been deliver'd to her. This gave us that excellent work of *Irenæus*; and *Tertullian*, not only in his book *de Carne Christi*, but in his *Prescriptions* too, argues against them upon this very bottom of traditional authority, till at last the *Δοκῆσαι* the *Valentinians*, the *Marcionists*, and whatever other denominations they were

rank'd under, were thought something distinct from Christians, and those very denominations became as much a note of infamy, as they were of error.

Thus again, when *Cerintbus*, *Ebion* and the *Samosatarians* ventur'd to deny the Divinity of our Saviour, and asserted him to be only a mere Man ; we have as early proofs of the Incarnation of the Son of God, as were their heresies ; for against the first of these, St. *Jerome* tells us, St. *John* wrote the beginning of his Gospel ; the second was determin'd against by that learned confutation of *Irenaeus*. And when *Paul* of *Samosata* Bishop of *Antioch*, notwithstanding this would still venture to spread the same error, not only the doctrine was condemn'd, but the author of it depos'd in that famous council of *Antioch* ; where the doctrine of the Incarnation was afresh establish'd, by that known Canon of theirs, which asserts Christ to be *Ἐν πρόσωπῳ συνθεσὶς ἐκ θεϊνῆς ὑπερσαρὸς καὶ ἀνθρωπίνης σαρκός*, one Person, consisting of the celestial Divinity and human Flesh. Thus have we the catholick Tradition, concerning the Incarnation, fetch'd down from the very fountain of it, the scriptures, and sufficiently establish'd in relation to the two natures, both that assuming, and that assumed. There remains therefore now only to consider, such disputes as have arisen concerning the nature

nature of this union, and what determinations the Church has thought fit to make concerning them. Amongst the earlier Hereticks, there were various confus'd notions concerning this union of the two natures in Christ; but such as may be all reduc'd to the single notion of Inhabitation, and seem to be summ'd up in it by the *Samosatensians*, who when they found their Master's notion of Christ's being born a mere Man, could never answer those glorious and divine accounts, which the scriptures give of him, allow'd a particular descent of God to inhabit him, whom notwithstanding they thought no more than a mere Man, as the great *Athanasius* both represents, and at the same confutes their opinion, in his treatise of the Incarnation against them. Εἰ γὰρ καὶ θεὸν ἐνοικεῖν ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ λέγοιεν, μὴ παραδεχόμεθα· ἐνοικεῖ δὲ ἐν ἡμῖν, καθὰς γέγραπται, ἐνοικήσω ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐμπεριπατήσω. ἡ δὲ ἐν ἐν διαφέρει ἡμῶν, κατὰ τὸν αὐτῶν λόγον· ὥς· εἰ συμπροσκυνῆς τὸν ἄνθρωπον τῷ θεῷ λόγῳ κατὰ τὴν ἐνοίκησιν, συμπροσκυνεῖ καὶ τοῖς ἁγίοις διὰ τὸν ἐνοικῆντα ἐν αὐτοῖς. *Tom. 1. p. 393. i. e.* Tho' they do tell us, That God does inhabit in the Man, we are not yet to receive them as Catholicks: for he inhabits in us too, as it is written, *I will dwell in them and walk amongst them.* According to their Account therefore he does not any way differ from us; wherefore if you worship the man, together

ther with God the word, upon the account of Inhabitation only, you may as well worship the saints; for he inhabits them too. And a little after, to set us right, tells us, *we must believe him to be one Person, both before the Incarnation and after it*: And again, καὶ πρότερον καὶ νῦν ὁ αὐτός ἐστι, καὶ ἔχ' ὕστερον ἀποθεωθεὶς, ὥς ἡ νῦν βλασφημία βιάζεται. Both before and now he is the same, not one who was afterwards made a God, as some blasphemers would now persuade us.

After these succeeded the *Apollinarians*, who seem'd a little to refine upon this inhabiting notion, and would upon the strength of that Philosophy, which they were great masters of, assert that our Saviour did not take the whole human nature, but an human body only, and so God the word did not barely come to inhabit in it, but was instead of an informing soul to it, and so became the essential part; but the divine perfection being incapable of becoming a part of any thing which necessarily implies an imperfection, this Opinion was condemn'd too both by the catholick fathers in the east, as may be seen by *Greg. Nazian. Ep. to Nectarius* and *Cledonius*; as also by a western synod at *Rome*.

This led *Nestorius*, who follow'd not long after into such a consideration of the perfect Humanity of Christ, as made him assert it not only to be a perfect human nature,

nature, but also that it had no other but a bare human subsistence; and from hence asserted, the Virgin to have brought forth only a bare and mere human Person, and so deny'd her to be θεοτόκος, or the Mother of God. But then to give an account of all that divine power, which did so evidently accompany our Saviour, tho' he affirm'd him to be only a man, yet he allow'd him to be ἄνδρα θεοφόρον, such a man as carried God about with him, and asserted such an union of the Godhead and Manhood, as was δια συνάφειαν, by some kind of intimate conjunction, but still divided Christ into two persons, an human and divine; by this means blending those establish'd notions of St. *John* and the great Council of *Nice*, who had both affirm'd, that it was God who was made Man: For this account of *Nestorius*, seems rather to make the Man assume the Godhead, than the God assume the Manhood. This opinion therefore, upon account of the greatness of the man, for he was no less than Patriarch of *Constantinople*, cost the Church more trouble than any of the former: For when the united power of *Cyril* and *Celestine*, the two Patriarchs of *Alexandria* and *Rome*, could not reduce him, the Emperor was forc'd to call a general Council which met at *Ephesus*, and there not only depos'd the heretick, but condemn'd his doctrine too, establish-

establiſhing at the ſame time St. *Cyriſ*'s determination, under a ſevere Anathema againſt all thoſe, who did not aſſert the union of the two natures to be καθ'ὕποſταſιν, hypotaſtical or perſonal, or an Aſſumption of the human Nature into an unity of Perſon with the Son of God. And this was in the year 431, from which time it continu'd the fix'd and eſtabliſh'd doctrine of the Church. For tho' *Eutyches* and his followers the *Acephali* and *Monothelites*, gave the Church ſome further trouble upon this account of the Incarnation, or at leaſt the conſequences of it; yet were they never able to unfix it, but were condemn'd by the ſixth general Council, with a further prohibition, not only to all novel opinion, but alſo to all καινοφωνία, all novel and heterodox language too. And by no leſs authority than this was not only the ſenſe, but the terms too, of an hypotaſtical or perſonal union, deliver'd down to the Church, tho' ſome have crudely enough taken it only for a ſcholaſtick notion; till at laſt it ſettled in that known maxim of the Schools. 'Tis *unio naturarum, non naturalis, unio perſonalis, non perſonarum*. And thus at the Reformation, our own Church found and receiv'd it, as is evident from the eſtabliſhment of it in the ſecond of her thirty nine articles; and God be thanked, we have now Governors, who as well as the Fathers of
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the sixth Council, have enjoyn'd us not to dispute of these mysteries, but in the language of the Church.

Thus have I endeavour'd, with all possible brevity, to represent to you, how the doctrine of the Incarnation has been receiv'd by the catholick Church, and stands now establish'd in our own. There remains only now to consider,

III. *The ill consequences of those errors, which have been entertain'd concerning this Doctrine.*

Nor have we time here to consider the immediate consequences of every particular error which has been entertain'd concerning it; for they would fill a volume, and are the work of those, who have given us elaborate historical accounts of Hereticks and their errors. But the great end of the Incarnation, being the Redemption of man by such a satisfaction for their sin, as they themselves were not able to make; I shall consider the consequences of these errors under such general considerations, as have some relation to that. As first,

1. They who deny the divine nature in Christ, seem to destroy the whole œconomy of the divine Philanthropy, and rob us of the most engaging argument we can have for our love of God and obedience to him: For if he did not send his Son in-
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to the world, then all the prophecies and promises of the old testament, and all the principles of the new, are at once overturned; then is all our christian hope and faith vain; then lastly does the Apostle to the *Hebrews* give us a false account of the divine counsels for the Redemption of man, when he represents the Son thus speaking to the Father in the words of the Psalmist, *in burnt offerings and sacrifice for sin, thou hast had no pleasure; then said I, lo I come to do thy will, O God.*

2. They who deny the human nature, rob us of the consequence of that divine consultation; *a body hast thou prepared me*, and take away from us the only sacrifice that can be acceptable and well pleasing unto God; and leave us as much without a plea for mercy, as we are without one for our justification.

3. They who deny the hypostatical or personal union, deny the value of that price which was paid for our Redemption; *for we were not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ*, which is therefore precious, therefore of an infinite value, because it is the blood of him who is an infinite Person: For as the Schools tells us, the personality does not concur effectively to the actions of its nature, yet does it set a value upon them proportionable to its
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own dignity: And therefore, when the Person who satisfies for us, is infinite, the value of that action, by which he satisfies for us, will be so too.

And these are such consequences, as are, I hope sufficient, when nam'd only in a christian Congregation, to deter us from such doctrines, as do directly lead us to them.



SER.



SERMON XXIX.

MATTH. xxii. 37, 38.

Jesus said unto him, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thy self: This is the first and great Commandment.*



THAT before our Saviour's coming in the flesh, the Jews had lost the very life and soul of their religion, left the text to pursue the comment, and for the word of God had entertain'd the traditions of men, may be easily gather'd from their silly and superstitious disputes concerning the bare outside of Religion; such as were their doctrines of washing, of cleansing the outside of the cup and platter, which our Saviour often upbraids them with; their ceremonious tything of mint, anise and cummin, whilst they neglected the more weighty

ty duties of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; for which our Saviour pronounceth a woe upon them, not for doing the one, but because they left the other undone. Wherefore it may be very reasonably question'd, whether this great Rabbi and Doctor of Jewish law, who ask'd our Saviour here, *which was the great commandment, what he should do to inherit eternal life*, might not be one of those who disputed himself into ignorance, and asked the question as much to be inform'd, as to tempt our Saviour to give his own sentiments of the *Mosaical* law. But however that was, our Saviour gives him an answer worthy so divine a person, and highly tending to the promoting of that grand design for which he came into the world. For since the whole oeconomy of our Saviour upon earth, was undertaken for the salvation of sinful man, and for the promoting of the interest of religion; which is the greatest interest of mankind, where could our Saviour better lay the foundation, than in the love of God, which is the first principle of religion, and the true cause of holy reverence and devotion? *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: this is the first and great commandment.*

That we may the better understand this our duty towards God, I shall shew ye,

I. Where-

I. Wherein this love of God consists, or how we are to love God.

II. That this true love of God is the best principle of an holy life.

III. I shall give you some directions how we are to improve this love of God ; by shewing you, according to the method of my text : *That we are to love him with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind.* But first of the first,

I. *Wherein this love of God consists, or how we are to love God.*

There are some who take much pains to involve this notion in obscure words, as if it were nothing but a piece of enthusiastick bombast, or seraphick nonsense, words of fine composure which please the ear, but never reach the heart ; a rapturous speculation; wherein we find nothing but the loss of our reason : But this will never reach, or rather hurries us beside the notion of this true love of God, which consists in a real, a rational action, and is in truth the greatest part of the christian practice. It is the real inclination of our will to the will of God, as designing nothing in his commands, but goodness to us, and glory to himself. *St. John* whose notions were as fine and

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as seraphic, as any one that ever writ, and from which he gain'd the name of the Divine, doth yet deliver the meaning of this duty, in so plain and practical a sense, that nothing can be easier either to be understood or done by us. For thus he telleth us from the mouth of our Saviour, in ch. xiv 21. of his gospel; *He that bath my Commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.* And again, v. 23. *If a man love me, he will keep my words.* And to shew us, that this is not only an occasional description of the love of God, but the real sense and true notion which he had of it, he gives us the same account of it again, in his first Epistle general ch. ii. 5. *But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.* So that this beloved Disciple, who lov'd, and therefore was beloved, hath shewn us not only wherein this love of God consists, but also how we may make tryal of our selves, and assure our selves that we are masters of it, *i. e.* we must demonstrate our love to God, by our obedience to his will; true love and true obedience can be no more separated, than can the sun and light, one being the immediate and inseparable consequence and property of the other. For tho' some do make obedience the consequence of another principle,

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ple, *i. e.* do ground it upon a slavish principle of fear, as some of the Pagans do, who worship the devil, only to avoid those harms, which they apprehend from him; yet will not this compleat an evangelical obedience; for he who is obedient to the commands of the gospel, only for fear of the threatnings therein contain'd, can never make himself master of that temper of mind, which is to be the beginning of his happiness here, and the complement or consummation of it hereafter: *i. e.* He that obeys God, only out of fear of him, can never truly enjoy him. For he obeys him only because he apprehends him more powerful than himself, nor would he any longer submit his will to God, could he by any means free himself from him, and secure himself against his power, which is utterly inconsistent with true happiness; for that is an ardent affection, an intimate desire and longing after the enjoyment of God. But to what end then do the threatnings of the gospel serve, if not to the securing of our obedience to the will of God? Why to this chiefly.

The dangers therein threatned, may serve sometimes for the awaking a drowsy and lethargick soul out of its sins, and fright it into an obedience to the will of God but if that do become a true obedience, it
must

must be perfected and secur'd by love; for otherwise should the soul but sleep again, and forget the threatnings of God, it would lose all its obligation to obey. So that true evangelical obedience, can be the consequence of nothing else but true love.

Love is the concord or agreement of wills; wherefore to love God truly, we must have a right apprehension of him; before our will can act truly upon him, we must consider him, not only as a powerful Being, an irrational will which acts only because it will, but as an Almighty will, mov'd by the greatest goodness, and govern'd by the highest wisdom, such an one as needs no previous deliberation in the understanding, because wisdom is all in all; such an one as cannot give us the least jealousy or apprehension of evil, because goodness runs thro' all its actions: When we have thus according to our scantling, apprehended this immense Being, we must represent it to our wills, and incline them to a conformity with, and submission to it. And when our wills are thus become conformable to the divine, a free and unreserv'd obedience doth naturally follow and flow from it: For what can give us any check or scruple in our obedience, when in all our actions done in obedience to the divine command, we have an Almighty

wisdom to secure us from all folly, an Almighty goodness from all evil. Wherefore then and then only do we truly love God, when we chearfully and for his own sake, obey all his Commandments; then do we love God, when there is a perfect agreement between our wills and the will of God; when the divine will commands such things, and ours embrace them because so commanded.

Love is called by *St. Paul* πλήρωμα τῆ νόμου, the fulfilling of the law; not that the notions of love and obedience are confounded and jumbled into one by this Apostle, but that, as elsewhere he expresseth the energy of faith to proceed from love, so here love is the cause, and obedience is the immediate and inseparable consequence or effect of it.

And this will appear more plainly to us, if we do but consider the methods of Gods Providence in the government and management of the world. For he did not at first make us meer machines, nor did he ever design to govern us by an arbitrary and uncontrollable will; but created us free agents with rational souls and elective faculties, and left us to our selves upon reasonable grounds to chuse the good and refuse the evil. And herein do we show our love to God, when our wills in compliance with
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and subordination to the divine Will, reject the evil and embrace the good: But by the contrary hypothesis, when we are said to be necessarily predetermin'd to such or such actions, we cannot properly be said to act either out of love or fear; but only from a previous necessity, fatally determining to such or such actions. Wherefore that doctrine which destroys this great fundamental of our religion, deserves worthily to be rejected, and to give place to the more rational principle of free-will, by which alone this phenomenon of the love of God is reasonably to be solv'd. For Love is a passion so much depending upon the *Ἀυτεξέστικον*, or that principle in man, which we may call self-power; that nothing from without can be prevalent enough to force it in us, any otherwise than as instrumental causes, or motives to persuade us to it.

Wherefore our way truly to love God, is first of all to purge our selves from all that dross and filthiness, I mean the carnality of this world, which darkens our souls and depresses our faculties, and hinders the streaming brightness of that divine object, which, could we but once truly apprehend, it were impossible for us not to love. There is something in us of kin to the Divinity; and when God said, *let*

us make Man after our own Image, he stamped an Impression upon our souls, which if it could have its free scope, would be continually pressing forward, till at length it attained to the perfect stature of the fulness of Christ: This would unite our wills to the divine will, and then, when by that blessed union they were both become one, it will be our choice to do what God commands, because we could not will otherwise than he did; it would be our greatest interest and his Glory.

And thus are we truly to love God, not by an empty and airy speculation only of his divine Attributes, which causes in us an ecstasick admiration, rather than a true practical love; but by such a rational apprehension of his divine wisdom and goodness, as may incline us to a real and hearty endeavour after a true conformity to them in our selves, when our wills are perfectly subdu'd unto his, and do readily and cheerfully embrace all those duties and commands which he hath prescrib'd us to be observ'd, to bring us to a conformity with the divine Image. *This is loving me* (saith our Saviour) *when ye keep my Commandments.* i. e. Not when ye forbear doing evil for fear of the punishment threatned to it, and certainly consequential upon it, but when ye do good for goodness sake, and for the
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sake of that supream goodness that commanded it. Thus is Love the harmony of souls ! That blessed thing which gives us the fruition of God even in this life, that which is the beginning of our heaven even in this world, and that which is to be the chief part and consummation of our happiness in the world to come. These and greater comforts shall we enjoy, if we can but once become truly masters of this real and practical love ; if we can but so love our Lord God as to keep his commandments, not for fear but for love of him that commandeth it.

But I pass now to my second proposition, namely that,

II. *This Love is the best Principle of an holy Life.*

That the life of God is holy cannot be deny'd by those, who do acknowledge God Almighty to be infinitely blessed and happy ; and that the chief part of a Christian, is, as St. Gregory's Nyssen calls it, τῆς θείας φύσεως μίμνησις, an aiming or intending, a transcribing or copying out the divine Nature ; must be confess'd by all who admit of the truth of that precept of our Saviour's, wherein he commands us *to be perfect as*

our Father in heaven is perfect ; but no one can set that before himself as a pattern for his imitation, which he does not first admire and approve.

Wherefore since all our Christian life and the perfections of it, are to be drawn from the grand exemplar of the Divinity, we must first learn to love that, and then we shall proceed more vigorously and chearfully in our endeavours after the attainment of it. And this is a principle can never fail us ; for as the object of our love is infinite and unbounded, so must our love be also, till it be finally compleated in the endless enjoyment of that everlasting good.

But to keep our selves within the compass of this life ; I shall endeavour to shew you, how the love of God doth effectually promote happiness in us here, and then we need not doubt of its procuring to us happiness hereafter. For our Saviour himself hath promised, *that those that are holy or pure in spirit shall see God*, in which beatifick vision consists the very essence of happiness : And that we may proceed the more clearly discoursing this unto you ; I shall consider first,

1. Wherein the Being of an holy life consists.

2. How this is promoted by the love of God.

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1. The life of man is often distinguish'd by the great Apostle St. *Paul*, into the natural and spiritual. By the natural is meant that life, which consists in the vital union of our soul and body; that by which we are said in general to live, and which is worse, that by which we are born the children of wrath. For by the fall of our first parents, our nature was involv'd in such a curse as hath inseparably stuck to it ever since, insomuch that the holy psalmist doth as truly as universally pronounce of all mankind, *That we are born in iniquity, and that in sin our mothers do conceive us.* And this corruption sticks so close to our nature, and grows up with it so insensibly, as if it really were a part of it; this is that law of the members warring against the spirit which St. *Paul* complains of. This is that which every good man finds the hardest task in all his christian life to conquer and subdue. This in fine is that which is the only spring and incentive of all our Lusts and Corruptions; that perpetual enemy to the true peace of our mind, that continual opposite to an holy life.

Wherefore as contraries do illustrate one another, we shall from this view of the natural life more easily demonstrate to you

you the glory and splendor of the spiritual one, which consists in a perfect opposition to the natural one. For the spiritual life is, *the renewing of our minds, the becoming new creatures, the being born again*, as our Saviour expresseth it, not as *Nicodemus* grossly conceiv'd, by *entering a second time into our mothers womb*, for that is utterly impossible; but the being born again of water and of the holy ghost. And the first step to a spiritual life is our being born again of water, when by the laver of regeneration, or sacrament of holy baptism, all the stain and guilt of our original corruption, at least as to the imputation of it is washed away; and though there may remain in us still some of that original concupiscence, or proneness of the natural man to evil, yet so long as we can by an holy discipline, or virtuous exercise of our selves in all goodness, keep it from breaking out into open and actual sins, and add thereto a general repentance, it shall not be imputable to us.

From this happy beginning we must go on still from grace to grace, proceeding still conquering and to conquer, 'till we have subdued these rebellious principles of the carnal man within us, and brought them under subjection to the spirit: which, as it is a task too hard for
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man ever perfectly to compleat whilst he carries flesh and blood about him, yet must he still be endeavouring after it; and though he cannot absolutely conquer, yet must be sure to take care that he be not conquered.

And this expression of St. *John's* of *going out, conquering and to conquer*, is the best explication of the christian life which can possibly be made. For he that sits down content with the conquest of one sin only, may leave behind him legions of devils to keep possession of his soul, and drive from thence true holiness. So that an holy life, at least such as we can attain to in this world, consists in perpetual action, the continual struggle of our souls between good and bad; the devil on one hand assisting our lusts, and tempting us with all the art and insinuation imaginable, the spirit of God on the other hand assisting the natural goodness of our souls, and enabling us to reject and conquer all his temptations. And the utmost perfection of it in this world can be no more than the absolute conquest and mastery of the spirit over the flesh; the forming of the image of Christ in our hearts, the enthroning and enstating him there, and rendering our selves secure of such a divine strength, that we shall be as certainly able
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to vanquish and subdue our rebellious lusts, as we shall be certain to be assaulted by them. For there is certainly no such state in this life as some have too securely dream'd of, *viz.* such a state of grace from which it is impossible to fall. For grace is no more than holiness militant; and if we do not so manage the warfare, so fight the good fight, as continually to overcome, we shall certainly at length be vanquished; and then must unavoidably follow a fall. For indeed there is no such thing as peace to be expected here, no not so much as a truce or cessation, grace being still to remain militant, 'till it be compleated into glory, which is holiness triumphant.

Thus have I laid down before you the state of an holy life, wherein it principally consists, *viz.* in the continual inclination of our minds to goodness and virtue, a wary and cautious guard over our selves, against all the approaches of evil, and an obstinate and unshaken resolution of rejecting and repelling all the temptations of our spiritual enemies. This if we can assure our selves of, we may be sure of holiness enough here, to make us masters of happiness hereafter; wherefore I shall proceed to the main thing design'd in this Proposition, namely to shew,

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2. How this holiness is effectually promoted by the love of God.

We have seen how necessary an universal obedience to all the precepts of God, both in doing what is commanded, and in avoiding what is forbidden, is to a true state of holiness; and withal, that the true love of God, if it be not the same thing with it, yet at least cannot be conceiv'd without a just observance of those commands.

Wherefore how intimate is the conjunction between these two, love and holiness, when the necessary effect and consequence of the one, seems to be the very essence and constitutive of the other! We cannot love God without admiring and imitating his holiness; love worketh in us faith, that is, a practical belief of God's commandments; that faith obedience to those commands, and obedience holiness, without which we cannot see God. Thus is love the concatenation of all those heavenly virtues which make up in us a perfect christian life; 'tis that which never ceases to work upon our souls 'till it hath really united us to the divinity. For St. *John* tells us in his 1 Ep. iv. 16. *That God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* How fair an advantage
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is this to us, how great a step towards the promoting in us an holy life, when the divinity shall condescend to take up his habitation not only amongst men, but even within them in their very hearts and souls? How must this irradiate all our faculties, brighten the darkness of our souls, and by the light of its truth expel from us the mists of error and ignorance!

How happy was *Adam* in innocence, whilst the purity of his mind, and the single and unrival'd love of his Creator, gave him the enjoyment of a daily conversation with God Almighty; and whatever the sin was which was the cause of his fall, the first cause and promoter of that sin was originally a disrespectful slight of God's command, a withdrawing his affections from God, and fixing his love upon another object. For though God be a benign, gracious, and good God, yet is he a jealous one also; and the command to the Jews was, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God alone, and him only shalt thou serve.* And the command of our Saviour is like unto it, *viz. He that loveth the World, the love of God dwelleth not in him.* Not that we are forbidden to love any thing else besides God, but that whatever else is the object of our love, ought to be so only for God's sake,
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and not in opposition to him; for whatever withdraws our affections from God, makes a separation between God and us; love being the only cement which firmly joins and unites us to the Divinity.

And we have as fair an assurance from our Saviour the second *Adam*, (who came out of pure love to mankind, to restore to us all and greater benefits, would we but make our selves capable of them, than the first *Adam* did ever enjoy): We have, I say, still a great assurance of such his gracious converse with us: For though the disobedience and disrespect of man, his separating himself from the love of God, by joining himself unto the body of sin, forc'd the Almighty to forbear those frequent manifestations of himself which he used to make unto them personally; and from thenceforth treating with them only by mediators, sending his precepts and commands unto them in writing: Yet notwithstanding, since the preaching of the Gospel, the principal design of which was to reinstate us in our primitive liberty, of being the sons of God; this true love of God, whenever it is sincerely renewed within us, and firmly fix'd in our hearts, is still able to bring down God unto us, and give us the happiness of his abode with us. For thus our Saviour assures us, *John*
xiv. 23.

xiv. 23. *If a man love me he will keep my words, and my father will love him, and we come unto him and make our abode with him.* This is truly reinstating us in all the happiness of Paradise: For where God truly is, what can there be wanting either of true perfection or true happiness? The fruition of God is all the blessed saints above do enjoy, the fullness of their happiness, and that which compleats the state of their glory.

Now if the true practical love of God, acquires the same fruition of the Divinity, though in a lower degree, (for this mortal is not capable of the fulness of glory 'till it hath put on immortality) yet, I say, if it doth give those saints, who have attain'd to it, a fruition of the divinity; according to the rules of analogy, it must as much confirm their state of holiness, as it doth the others of Glory. And thus may the love of God, in this sense, be said to be the best principle of an holy life, because it not only brings us to that wherein an holy life doth principally consists, but gives us that also which is the best security of it; by giving us a kind of anticipation of heaven, in the enjoyment of God even in this life.

But this love of God doth yet further promote holiness, in that it brings with it a certain natural complacency and delight
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for the thing loved. For when we so love God, that he who is the object of our love becomes to us the most pleasant and delightful thing in the world ; then certainly must Holiness, which is only a ray of his Divinity, and no way proper to us but only by communication from him, become as pleasing in the attaining, as it is grateful or profitable to us when attained. For every step we make in this our progress toward perfect holiness, is by degrees approaching so much nearer and nearer unto God.

Since therefore our love is ultimately design'd for and aimed at God, who is the supreme and chiefest good, it cannot but highly commend to us, and promote in us holiness of life, which is the only true and proper means to bring us to that end. *St. Paul* tells us in the twelfth chapter of his Epistle to the *Hebrews*, verse 14. *That without holiness no man shall see God.* Wherefore all our pretended love of God is only airy and notional, unless it do effectually work in us such an holiness of life, as is the proper instrument or medium to bring us to the end or object of our love. To love God and neglect his commandments, is to contradict our profession by our practice ; to say

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one thing and do another. Wherefore if our love do not direct us as well to the practice as profession of religion, it is all but fiction and fantasy. *Philo* the Jew, *lib. de Decalog.* tells us, that τέλος τῆς εὐδαιμονίας ἐστίν ἢ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἐξομοίωσις. The end of all happiness is the becoming like unto God. Our Saviour tells the *Sadducees*, *That in the resurrection we shall be ἰσάγγελοι, equal to the Angels.* And *St. John* 1 Ep. iii. 2. tells those saints who are adopted into the sons of God, *That it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

All these seraphical descriptions of the supreme happiness of man, which do all agree in this, that it consists in some kind of similitude of our Natures to the divinity; give us a fair demonstration, that if we intend so to love God, as to enjoy him, (as there is nothing can love, but must at the same time aim at the fruition of the object beloved). That then this love of God must work in us that similitude to the divine nature, which is the chief and most necessary ingredient of our happiness. We must not be, as the devil, when he first deluded our first parents, persuaded them, *They should be, like Gods knowing*

knowing good and evil, but we must be like unto God in all ways, doing good and not admitting evil. This practical love of God must plant in our hearts a true practical principle of holiness and righteousness : It must vanquish and subdue those *Anakims* of the land, those giant-like lusts and corruptions, which have gotten the dominion over us, demolish the strong holds of sin, and by pleasant gradations work us up to such a purity and holiness of mind as may enable us to see God, and not die ; or rather, to see God, and live everlastingly. In a word, if this love of God will be truly such, as hath a simple and single aim upon God, and God only, it must purify us even as he, who is the object of our love, is pure.

Thus have we gone through the two first Propositions, and in them shew'd you, wherein 1st, this love of God doth consist. 2dly, How it is the best principle of an holy life ! We must thirdly proceed to give you some directions how this love is to be improv'd, viz. *By loving God with all our heart, and with all our mind, and with all our soul.*

III. The love of God, as I describ'd it to you, is of so great advantage to mankind,

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brings along with it such certain and solid benefits, that the improvement of it is really and in truth the improvement of our own happiness. Our action in loving God can bring no advantage to him as being perfectly happy in, and all-sufficient to himself. Wherefore the whole benefit of it rebounds upon our selves, and the more we love him the greater is our happiness. For since this love of God rightly apprehended and heartily embrac'd, is the best means to procure for us, that which is the chief aim of every good Christian, whilst in this life, I mean holiness, which I have prov'd to you by shewing you, that this true love of God is the best principle of an holy life; and since every degree of holiness which is perfected by this love, brings us so much nearer unto God; there is nothing certainly can be more worthy our most earnest pursuit, than is this love; the improvement of which doth naturally advance us from holiness to glory, from the admiration to the enjoyment of God.

Let us therefore *love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our mind, and with all our soul, i. e.* Let all and every faculty of the whole man, be employ'd in this great duty;
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the object is comprehensive enough to fill the largest of our desires, and where the object of our love is infinite, we may receive an infinity of satisfaction, and yet still retain an infinite desire of it.

But to be more plain with you, I shall shew you how this love of God is to be improv'd, by going through the several particulars of my text, and shewing you what is meant by *loving God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind.*

These are three of the principal faculties of man requir'd here to be perfect in this love, *καρδία the heart, ψυχή the soul, and διάνοια the mind or cogitation*, as *Tremellius* translates it. *St. Luke* in the parallel place to this, ch. x. 27. adds a fourth, *ἐν τῇ ὁλῇ ἰσχύϊ, with all our strength*, but this seems rather to be exegetical of the other three, than to be a fourth distinct from them, and to shew to us the manner and intention of the action; for as all these faculties are to be employ'd in the love of God, so is the whole of every one of them to be exercis'd therein with all their might and strength, with all their vigour and power. For the explication of these three faculties to you, you must understand, First,

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I. That

1. That by the Heart is meant, the active or practical principle in man, that which doth the duty required of us.

2. By the Soul is meant the will or elective faculty in man, that by which we chuse the duty to be done.

3. By the Mind is meant the intellectual faculty in man, whereby we understand the duty to be done.

Wherefore inverting the order of these, which may seem more natural and easy to you, I shall shew you first,

1. How we are to *love God with all our mind* : viz. By rightly apprehending what is truly our duty and to be done by us.

2. How we are to *love God with all our soul* : viz. By steadily approving what is so apprehended and to be done by us.

3. How we are to *love God with all our heart* : viz. By sincerely acting what is so apprehended and approv'd by us.

And first of the first, that *to love God with all our mind*, we must rightly apprehend what is truly our duty and to be done by us.

1. If we consider the great goodness of God to mankind, who hath created them rational creatures, made them intellectual beings, and endued them with a principle of knowledge, which doth as far exceed the dull sensations of the rest of the Creation,

ation, as it self is exceeded by the Divinity ; I say, if we consider the great kindness of God Almighty to us, in joining immortal souls to these cadaverous bodies, and giving us faculties to comprehend whatever comes within the reach of our understandings : We cannot certainly look upon it as any difficult task impos'd upon us to perfect the love of God in our minds ; for there is nothing else to be requir'd from this faculty of our soul, but only a right apprehension of what is our duty and to be done by us. And how easy were this for man, who, were he not his own enemy, could not possibly be mistaken in this duty. For had our reason a free and uninterrupted course, were it not intercepted by our passions, or darkened by our vices, it would certainly lead us into a right apprehension of things. For reason, if it be not bribed by our own lusts, can never of it self mistake vice for virtue, or apprehend that for good which is really evil and hurtful to us. Misapprehension of things, is not only the first and great cause of all our mistakes in practice, but also, of all the errors and differences which are in the world.

The worldling, under whose character may be compris'd all manner of carnality, could never reject the celestial pleasures of a spiritual life, for the dull and insipid

enjoyments of this world, were he not first mistaken in the object of his desires : the covetous person makes his wealth the sole object of his love and delight, and therefore in St. *Paul's* phrase becomes an Idolater : all those differences in Religion, which have so miserably broken and shatter'd the unity of the Church of God, are no more but the abortive Issues of mistaken judgment or misapprehension at first, however afterwards improv'd into the obstinate and dangerous sins of heresy and schism.

For Instance, the *Romanist* becomes an Idolater by paying divine worship to the host : No saith he, we do not worship a breadden God, but the real divinity which is transubstantiated into that species, and therefore our accusing them of idolatry is all calumny and abuse. But see here the power of misapprehension ; for when the Papist shall have his eyes opened or come to that state where he shall see as he is seen, and shall then find no such latent divinity in this creature of bread, which he hath worshipped upon that account, he must with confusion enough, confess his idolatry, in paying divine worship to the creature, notwithstanding his misapprehension of it for the Creator. For in a parallel case, can we imagine, that the
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old *Egyptians* would ever have paid divine worship to their leeks and onions, had they not through the prejudice of a strong misapprehension believ'd some divinity to have been really couchant in them? And indeed they seem to have been the more religious of the two, in that they did ceremoniously forbear to eat the food which they had deify'd, or devour those Gods which their mistaken fancy had created; and yet these were accused by the very heathens themselves of an unreasonable superstition.

Thus likewise the schismatick takes the first rise of his error from a mistake in judgment, or a misguided apprehension of things; he mistakes the very nature of things, and looking upon those commands of his superiors as sinful, which are really and in their own nature concerning things indifferent, he boggles in his obedience, and this seconded with a little obstinacy and perverseness, runs him into all the mischiefs of a cruel, wicked, and dangerous schism.

Wherefore to set our selves right in this particular, and truly to perfect the love of God in our minds, we must industriously endeavour after the true knowledge of our duty; by a diligent search after the will of God, which is truth, and which proceeds

proceeds from truth it self; remove the errors and mistakes of our judgment, and clear our souls from all misapprehension. Our Saviour sends the inquisitive *Jews* to the scripture for information, bids them *search them, for they do speak of him.* And if we will rightly inform our judgments, and truly understand what is our duty, we must seriously apply our selves to this direction of our Saviour: For since the knowledge of the will of God is the end and subject of our search and enquiry, and that which is to perfect the love of God in our mind, where can we make a more successful enquiry after it, than where God himself hath been pleased to reveal it to us? If our own reason should be so far debauch'd as not to be able to apprehend the existence of a God, thus we have plain demonstrations of him: If we are not able from the Being of a God by consequence to deduce the obligation also that lies upon us to worship him, there the duty is so well pressed upon us, and with so much authority, as not to suffer a refusal without great danger. There do we find those eternal laws of nature, I mean all the moral good we are oblig'd to embrace, and all the moral evil we are oblig'd to avoid, graphically represented to us, and set forth with all the possible advantages that

that can be imagin'd, on our side. The encouragements of blessings and rewards on the one hand, and the terrors of the Lord to persuade us on the other. Not only the commands but the Prohibitions also of God Almighty are there set forth in plain and easy words, and in a sense obvious enough to the meanest capacity of a Christian.

These are to be made familiar to our minds by a constant conversation with them: For nothing makes the laws of God more unintelligible to mankind, than an affected neglect of the study of them. And thus are we to *love the Lord our God with all our mind*, by diligently searching out, faithfully apprehending, and truly understanding, what is truly our duty commanded by him, and to be done by us: We must with the holy *David* make the law of the Lord our whole study and delight, lay a sure and unerring foundation for our practice in a clear apprehension and full understanding of the rule whereby our practice is to be guided: This is the first step to a solid and substantial love of God, when our minds are wholly busied and fully employed, in the understanding of his will and our duty.

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But because there are a great many who are much more ready at the knowledge than the practice of the law, and are not ashamed to confess in the language of the Poet, *video meliora proboq; — Deteriora sequor*, that is, That they know better things than they do or practice; there is therefore a second thing yet further necessary for the improvement of this love in us. We are

2dly. *To love the Lord our God with all our soul, i. e.* we must not only rightly apprehend, what is truly our duty, and to be done by us, but we must also steadily approve it and make it our choice when so apprehended.

By the soul I told you was meant the will or elective faculty in man, that by which we chuse and approve the duty to be done: Wherefore when our understanding is rightly inform'd concerning our duty, our will must be inclin'd to a compliance with our judgment so inform'd. For tho' when we consider our selves as reasonable creatures, it may seem more agreeable to our natures, that the will should become conformable to, and without the least hesitation or doubt embrace and follow the dictates of the rational part in us; yet

yet do we often find this blind faculty, unaccountably, and to the utter confusion of our souls, by the intervention of some hasty passion, or insinuating lust, slighting the proposals of reason to follow those of interest or passion.

Wherefore if we would truly love the Lord our God with all our soul, we must rectify this error of our nature, endeavour with all the earnestness we can, to free our wills from that prejudice and tyranny which they are involv'd in, by the prevalency of our passions above our reason. And though the corruption of our nature by the fall of man, hath given us a fatal bent and inclination to evil, yet must we, with our utmost endeavour, and by the assistance of the grace of God, which no faithful christian ever asked in vain, retrieve our selves, and again set up the authority of our reason; that reason which was made as well the guide as light of man. And when we have thus freed our wills from that violent bias which passion had laid upon them, and left them at least a fair indifferency of choice, we must look back upon our duty as it is represented to our will or elective faculty, by a well guided mind or understanding, and then refuse the choice of it if we can. For when the beauty of holiness

liness is once truly represented to us, and our souls made capable of comprehending that pleasantness which the wise *Solomon* assures us doth always accompany it; it becomes so grateful to a soul whose affections are thoroughly purg'd from all the grossness of carnality, that it must necessarily become the object of our choice before any other thing whatsoever that can be represented to our wills.

For let us but consider what the condition of our souls would be, could we once bring them to that purity which I have shew'd you is necessary for the perfecting of the love of God in them; and we cannot at all doubt the truth of this proposition, that our wills would more readily chuse and chearfully comply with that which is truly our duty, than any other object whatsoever: For then would our passions and worldly affections, those unruly and turbulent enemies of a true peace of mind, be subdued within the compass and command of reason, and act no otherwise than only assistant to it: Then would a calm consideration prevent all those mistakes and errors which proceed from the hasty and irregular impulse of passion, and represent our duty to our wills with so much fairness and so much advantage, that they
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not being clogg'd with any other Interest, would without the least suspence, make it the subject of their approbation and election.

Thus then is the perfecting the love of God in our souls, no more but the acting rationally, and according to those understanding faculties and reasonable apprehensions which God Almighty hath given us; the making that the object of our will or appetite which is the greatest good. And to souls thus purged and enlightened by a true apprehension of things, what can be a greater good, than to pursue those ends for which they were created, and to follow those means which lead to and direct them to that object, for the enjoyment of which they were at first design'd? Thus doth the natural frame of man, when it is once freed from those corruptions, (which if truly consider'd do put a force upon it, and act violently against it,) when it is permitted to act upon its own principles, lead us to the true love of God in this particular, which consists in a free and voluntary submission to the commands of God, and in chusing rather to be obedient to him, than to any other power either within our selves or without us.

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For when we consider the proposals of our lust, or whatever passion else gets the ascendant over us, in competition with those proposals of our reason enlightened by divine Revelation, it may give us sufficient cause of astonishment, that any one should be so weak or irresolute, as to make any doubt or hesitation in his choice between them, much more that any one should be so stupidly blinded as to prefer the one before the other. For what comparison can there be between the celestial joys of a spiritual life, and the dull, insipid, shortliv'd pleasures of this world! What is there within the compass of a narrow sordid earth, that can entice the covetous person to withdraw his affection from the love and admiration of the brightness of a celestial Majesty, to fix them upon a piece of yellow dirt, meaner than that from which the worst part of him (I mean his body) was form'd. And if we should particularly run through all the rest of those pleasures of the worldling, which cajole his soul, and hurry him beside that duty which is the main end of every reasonable creature, I mean the practical love of their Creator, we shall find them too light if weigh'd in the balance of the Sanctuary, not able to sway a will that is truly purg'd, and thoughts freed from the
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imperious dictates of an over-ruling passion : for such a one cannot be supposed to choose only by present delights and outward appearances, but upon an industrious search and previous deliberation of the understanding, and according to the real value and intrinsic worth of the things propos'd. Wherefore if our duty towards God being truly weigh'd, and thoroughly considered by the understanding, come to the determination of the will in competition with any other interest, however great in appearance, and carrying along with it all the inviting circumstances imaginable, yet doth the first bring along with it, to a will made capable of it, such solid and substantial benefits, that the advantage of the competition must needs fall on that side.

Thus if we propose to our selves those things which are looked upon as the greatest comforts of this life, wealth or honour, we shall find the enjoyment of them to fall exceeding far short of that real satisfaction which proceeds from a well regulated understanding, and a will duly and rightly inclin'd. Those are short and slippery pleasures, these lasting, and such as do directly lead us to eternal happiness ; those in the highest perfection of them, do only gratify the sensual and animalish part in man : these are the inward delight of the soul,

and lead us to those rivers of pleasure which flow for evermore.

Wherefore, when according to the first particular of improving the love of God, we have so purg'd our minds or understandings, as to make them capable of comprehending these blessings; when our intellectual faculties so comprehending have fairly represented them to the will, if yet there remain any doubt or hesitation in that faculty, which however cannot proceed but from the imperious power of some prevailing passion, which hath got the ascendant over it, for the perfecting of the true love of God in our souls. It must be removed, and the will left to its primitive freedom; nor must we, if we would truly love the Lord our God with all our soul, stay there, but when we have rid our wills from the power of those passions which put a constraint upon it; we must with our utmost endeavour incline that faculty to approve of, and close with that duty which is our greatest concern in this life, *viz.* A real submission of our will to all the commands of God, that we may be, as we daily pray, as inclinable to do his will *on earth, as it is done in heaven.*

Thus have we given you the two first improvements of the love of God, *viz.*

That

That 1. the way to love him with all our mind, is rightly to apprehend what is truly our duty and to be done by us.

2. The way to love him with all our soul, is stedfastly to approve the duty so apprehended, and incline our wills to a compliance with it. But there remains yet a third thing to compleat that obedience which constitutes the love of God, and that is,

3. We must love the Lord our God with all our heart. And that I told you was to be done by a sincere practice of that duty which is so apprehended and approved by us.

This is the very complement and consummation of this love, that without which all our other endeavours will prove but vain and ineffectual; for if good thoughts and good intentions be not finally terminated in, and demonstrated by good actions, they are but lame virtues, and hardly deserve the title they do carry along with them.

It is our Saviour's own rule, *That we should know the tree by its fruit*; and however some may at a distance seem fair and flourishing, yet if upon a nearer view they be found fruitless, they must expect with the barren fig-tree to receive the curse.

It is prodigious to think what some deluded Enthusiasts have suffered themselves to be persuaded into; some of them

believing, a bare unactive faith, as they call it, that is, a melancholy persuasion of their being certainly in a state of salvation, is enough to secure them, be their actions what they will; others believing a good intention only sufficient to sanctify the actual performance of the greatest villainies: but let the one of these remember what was the doom of the fruitless tree: and the other certainly cannot forget that plain, but undeniable truth of our Saviour, *That men do not gather grapes off thorns, or figs off thistles.* Such as the outward actions are, such must the inward principles of the Man be, from whence they spring. And if an action be in its own nature villainous, however specious and pious the intention and design of it, and the inducements to it may seem, yet must it proceed from an evil principle within. 'Tis possible indeed for an ignorant or melancholy soul, to be led into the most barbarous villainies with good intentions, as some thought they did God good service when they slew his prophets. But then their error must proceed either from a mistake in judgment, whilst they do misapprehend a real evil for a real good, as it usually doth; or else from a will miserably debauch'd, and enslav'd to some invincible prejudice or passion.

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Wherefore it is not without reason, that in shewing you how the love of God ought to be compleated in us, we have proceeded in this method, shewing first how those two faculties, the mind and soul, the understanding and will, ought to be regulated in us, in order to the laying a sure foundation for a good and honest practice; which is the very essence of love, as I have before shewed you: for unless these be truly modell'd in us, we can never be sure of a sincere and unerring practice; an error either of the will or understanding being certain to propagate itself into our actions also.

Wherefore when we have, according to the rules afore-prescribed, sufficiently purg'd those fountains and well-springs of all our actions, taught our minds to apprehend their duty, and our souls to approve and make it their choice; then must we vigorously proceed to a sincere practice of that duty, so resolv'd on, so approv'd; not to be content with a bare resolution only, but eagerly to push on to a chearful and active obedience. And since we are certain, that in the commands of God there cannot be any thing either unlawful or unreasonable, we must be sure not to suffer any thing, how harsh or how affrightful soever it may appear, to

interpose between us, and a free and unreserv'd submission.

Thus should the Lord command us, as he did *Abraham*, to sacrifice to him an only son with our own hands, and one too to whom the promise of becoming a great nation was made by God himself, we must not in this case be querulous, or expostulate with God Almighty; but rather with the faithful *Abraham*, notwithstanding all the arguments of a tender and paternal affection, fix in our heart such resolutions to perform the commands of God, however seemingly severe; as nothing can break or hinder our proceedings to an immediate obedience, save only the interposition of God himself, who alone hath the power of dispensing with our non-performance.

Such a resolution as this it was which made it be accounted unto *Abraham* for righteousness; let us therefore follow the example of *Abraham*; no longer cheat ourselves with saying we have good minds, we are well resolv'd; for whilst that we are slow and tardy in bringing those resolutions to performance, we do as good as tell God Almighty to his very face, that we know our duty but will not do it. Let us therefore imitate the faithful *Abraham*, without any Tergiversation or excuse, joining an honest practice to our know-

knowledge; and then shall it be accounted to us for righteousness; then shall we be said truly to love God whilst that we keep his commandments. How weak was the excuse of those guests, who being invited to the wedding feast refus'd to come, because they were otherwise hindred by worldly business; but how much weaker must ours be, when after the command of God, when after our own promise and resolutions too to obey that command, we do (as 'tis too plain a truth we daily do) suffer any other concerns to take us off from the performance of our duty.

We have in the tenth chapter of *St Luke* the same inquisitive Lawyer, who gives our Saviour here the opportunity of declaring that which is at present the subject of our discourse, there solicitous to know how he might inherit eternal life. Our Saviour bids him consider with himself what is written in the Law, upon which he presently repeats in the very words of my text, the sum of the moral law, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thy self*: whereupon our Saviour finding him so very ready at the knowledge of the Law, directs him only to the practice of it, saying, *Do this and thou shalt live*. This our Saviour knew to be the very life of the

Law, the great end and design for which it was penn'd ; and that by which alone we are capable of receiving any benefit or advantage from the Law.

Wherefore, as we all are, or at least ought to be, as inquisitive after eternal life as this Lawyer could possibly be, let us close with this advice of our Saviour, and join to the knowledge of our duty, a sincere and honest practice of it ; let the love of God, which, according to the account I have given you of it, will, if it be sincere, purge our souls in all their faculties ; let that love, I say, work in us obedience, and that obedience holiness.



S E R



SERMON XXX.

MATTH. xxii. 37, 38, 39.

*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with
all thy heart, and with all thy soul,
and with all thy mind.*

*This is the first and great commandment.
And the second is like unto it; Thou shalt
love thy neighbour as thy self.*



FROM the former part of these words we have already considered the first and great commandment, our duty to God in the love of him, what it is, and how it ought to be improv'd by us in every faculty of Man, the heart, the soul, and the mind. It remains to consider the second; our duty to our neighbour, in the mutual love of one another.

Now

Now the Gospel rule tells us, we must love our neighbour as our self. And therefore in discoursing of this grand duty of Christian love, I shall consider first,

I. How it is we ought to love our selves.

II. How it is we ought to love our neighbour.

I. *How it is we ought to love our selves.*

That there are degrees of divine love or charity, if it were not evident from the remarkably distinguish'd excellencies of the several objects which raise in us that noble passion, is yet sufficiently declar'd to us in Scripture : for when our Saviour upon the question of that inquisitive Lawyer in *St Matthew*, collected the sum of the moral Law, he tells him, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.*

The chief object therefore of our love is God Almighty ; there is none good but one above, and that is God : He is our chief, our supreme Good, from whence all other goodness is deriv'd, and we cannot love
any

any thing but what really is, or at least appears to be good. But then in subordination to this, with a due regard to that honour and esteem we ought to pay to this first object of our love, we are allow'd to have a decent respect and honour for our selves ; for tho' whatever is in man, is only a deriv'd and communicated good ; yet when it meets with a due and orderly culture and respect, it not only reflects back the honour upon its Author, but teaches us also to express and increase too our love of God. It concerns us therefore to be well acquainted with the orderly and regular management of this self-love, since it is not only an evidence and demonstration of our love of God, but is made also by our Saviour himself, the measure of our love to one another. An orderly and well regulated self-love, therefore, will require from us a due and worthy consideration of all the possible excellencies of our nature, what it is we are able to arrive to, how far we are capable of compassing it, and by what means and methods we must endeavour to attain to it ; for then it is evident we do truly love our selves, when we use our utmost endeavours to conciliate to our selves the best and most advantagious good to us imaginable ; for as there is a self-love which is blamable, so *St Paul, 2 Tim. iii.*
when

when he is giving us a character of the enemies of truth, amongst others tells us, *They shall be lovers of their own selves,* ver. 2. and ver. 4. *They shall be lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.*

As there is therefore a self-love that is inordinate and irregular, so we shall find the blame of it must arise from the proposing to themselves false ends, mistaken enjoyments; and consequently using irregular and undue means for the attainment of them. With these men, however God might be in their mouths, he never really was in all their thoughts. They may say, *Lord, Lord*, but shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven, because they never propos'd that for their utmost aim and enjoyment, and therefore never followed the ways that were to lead them thither. We shall find that these men have but a short and imperfect account of themselves; they propose always some perishing and worldly good for their utmost aim and happiness, and are never able to look into the beauteous prospect of an intellectual nature, and the full enjoyments of a spiritual world. They lie grovelling here below, and confine themselves either to the sordid toil of gaining riches, the uneasy labour of winning honour, or the brutish pursuits of compassing pleasure, and so think to die with-
out

out understanding, like the beasts that perish. But this is not the chief end of man, for we are a kind of composition, made up of two natures; we consist of immortal souls, as well as mortal bodies; and there is a promise made to all those who are under the oeconomy of Christ's Gospel, that even those mortal bodies *shall put on immortality.*

We must therefore, if we will truly love our selves, look forward to the recompence of the reward in another life, making the enjoyments of this world no more than what they ought to be, blessings of God given to us for the good use of them, and subservient means and instruments afforded us for the setting forth the glory of God, and doing good to our selves and others; this will teach us so to endeavour after the obtaining the riches of this world, as to be able to use, and not to serve them; this will teach us to be so call'd Lords and Masters here, as not to forget we have a Lord and Master in heaven. This will teach us so moderately to use the enjoyments of this life, as not to suffer them to cheat us of the everlasting pleasures in a better life.

For tho' common notions do state the nature of good in appetibility, or its being desirable; yet because we know by sufficient experience, that our desires are apt to be
irregular

irregular and inordinate, we must therefore look further into the nature of good, and find there something that shall be the reason of that appetibility or desirableness, which is an apt convenience or connatural sufficiency in the object desir'd, sufficient to answer the wants and expectations of the appetite desiring it. Since therefore our souls, the better part of us, are immortal and everlasting beings, their appetites and desires ought to be such too; and therefore the objects they should propose to themselves, ought to be such as are connatural and adequate to them, and such as are sufficient to fill those boundless capacities. Hence is it, that whenever we confine the natural strength and bent of our souls to perishing and worldly goods, such as are riches, honours, pleasures, however fortunate we may be in the attainment of them; yet are we so far from finding them such solid enjoyments as fill and satisfy the capacities of the soul, that they generally bring with them greater loads of cares and anxieties; and we are usually more uneasy under them than we were without them. He therefore does truly love himself who ultimately fixes the intention of his soul upon such an object as is able to give it a plenary satisfaction, and then uses these intermediate, subservient and subordinate goods,

goods, with a thankful acknowledgment of the Author of them, as instruments only of promoting that end.

Truly therefore to express the love of our selves, is so to demean our selves in all our actions, and in all our conversation, that our ultimate intentions may appear to be fixt upon the everlasting good. And tho' this busy life may engage us in many matters that are altogether foreign to a spiritual world, as being design'd only for the necessary or convenient supplies of corporeal wants, and even what in some cases is allow'd us an innocent luxury; for tho' our Saviour told *Martha* that *Mary* had chosen the better part, yet he did not condemn her's as bad, but so far approv'd of it as to partake of that entertainment she had been so busily employ'd in preparing for him. Tho' I say we must be necessarily engag'd in such affairs of life as these; for the common nature of society and man is naturally made for it, and the common necessities of our nature require it; yet may we all, thro' all the different varieties of life and business, still shew that we truly love our selves by so acting in our several stations and callings, that it may appear that whatever we do, we do all to the glory of God. Our Saviour's tryal of our love of God is fixt in duty, *Whoso keepeth my words,*

words, he it is that loveth me ; and again, If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments. And so must we try the love of our selves. He who is so fixt upon a true self-love, as that his whole intention aims at his eternal welfare, whatever business this life may engage him in, will never willingly wrong his soul for any interest, for any pleasure ; his business, and his duty will go hand in hand ; and tho' others may be richer and greater, yet none wiser than he ; for his chief intention being fixt upon the everlasting good, that being the rich jewel discover'd to him, he sells all his other substance to purchase that ; and therefore in all his actions puts himself under this consideration ; this may purchase wealth, that honour ; but does it open the narrow way, does it lead me on directly in my intended journey, will it bring me to the heavenly country. If any thing lies cross to these utmost intentions, whatever present advantage it may offer, yet will it be easily over-balanc'd by a due consideration of the eternal weight of glory.

This will keep him steddy in all the duties that are owing to himself ; he will neither suffer the interests of this world to cajole him, nor the pleasures of it to deceive him, but will always stand so strictly upon his guard, as to keep a conscience
void

void of offence. And thus while he measures his duty to himself by his Duty towards God, he learns to love himself as he does God, by keeping all those commandments, and observing all those duties, which his true and real interest, the purchase of his everlasting good, can oblige him to. Thus he becomes, as was said of *David*, *A man after God's own heart*. Thus he is sure to grow in favour with God, and cannot well miss of it with men; for tho' honesty and integrity may be derided and despised, oppress'd and injured, when it runs counter to the worldly interests of the licentious and inconsiderate; yet when those interests are serv'd, it naturally regains its credit, and is received even by those with veneration and esteem.

This then is the man who truly loves himself. And this man who endeavours to become the friend of God, and faithful to himself, can never fail of being the best neighbour to others; which brings us to the second thing to be considered, viz.

II. *How we are to love our neighbour.*

The reason of the command is, because they are our neighbour; and how far that word extends, our Saviour himself teaches

us in the parable of the good *Samaritan*, it must not be restrain'd to those only who are near and dear to us by affinity or kindred, nor to the narrow compass of such as dwell within the reach of our usual conversation; friends and acquaintance are too strait limits for a Gospel charity; it must be extended to all mankind, even to our very enemies, such as were the *Jews* and the *Samaritans*; for they are all in respect of God, our kindred and our neighbours. They are all created in the same image of God as we are; they all are capable of the same happiness and enjoyments that we hope for; and therefore if we truly wish the promotion of God's glory, we cannot help desiring that these should become partakers with us in it.

Thus large therefore is the subject of our love; our present inquiry is concerning the measures of it, *we are to love our neighbour as our self*. We need not doubt either the justness or wisdom of this measure, because it is prescribed us by our Saviour himself; and indeed it is as full of justice as it is of wisdom. It corrects our unequal partiality, and instructs us in what a blameable self-love would be apt otherwise to hide from us; for if we do but consider how partial we are apt to be in judging between our selves and others,
how

how apt to aggravate their faults, how ready to extenuate our own; how sagacious we are in discovering even a mote in our brother's eye, when we cannot discern the beam in our own.

This divine rule of charity will teach us to act with more cautiousness and wariness in our judgments, and keep that strict watch and guard upon us, as to secure us from being guilty of any thing we are apt to blame or find fault with in another. And this is such a sure foundation for Christian charity, as must necessarily promote in us both the love of our selves and others; he that acts upon this bottom, is equally kind to himself and others: his charity truly begins at home, and must be welcome to others, while the sincerity of it must necessarily convince them of, and the tenderness of it engage them to comply with the intended kindness. This is truly acting without any partiality, and only upon that universal principle which is peculiar to Christianity, the love of God, themselves, and of one another. We are all so mutually tied to the service of our Lord and Master, that like fellow-servants there ought to be no other emulation or strife amongst us; but only who should serve him best.

For the promoting therefore this mutual Christian love amongst one another,

we must so consider one another as St Paul bids us, *Heb. x. 24, 25. as to provoke one another to love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of our selves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another.* A careless attendance upon the service of God, or a total separation from it, are both of them destructive of that Christian charity, which must compleat our happiness in the kingdom of heaven; for the one of them shews us to be but lukewarm Christians, and not yet masters of that true self-love which ought to make us eager in the pursuit of that end, even to the neglecting of all others. And therefore those who are lukewarm in this service, do not love themselves, and consequently can never truly love their neighbour: the other who totally separate themselves from the service of God, and divide communion with us, must necessarily, to defend themselves, charge our communion with something that is unlawful and unchristian; which is a charge of that high nature, that if it be not fully prov'd, even to the evidence of a demonstration, must necessarily fix upon them the terrible censure of an unreasonable uncharitableness, for thus they leave us without the communion Saints; and if they happen not to have a very good ground for it, are by consequence guilty of disbelieving

believing one of the articles of the Christian faith.

And this is contrary to that love of our neighbour, which the schools call the holy love of our neighbour; for they tell us, our love of him must be first *sanctus*, by which term they seem to intimate to us, that we must endeavour to imitate that blessed union and communion which the Saints and Angels above have, where no schisms, no contentions disturb them; but all their time is blessedly employ'd, in singing constant Hallelujahs to the God of peace and love. But we are,

2. To love our neighbour justly, *i. e.* according to the strict rules and measures of justice; for as we must not out of an evil self-love condescend to indulge our own will in any thing that is unlawful, evil, or unjust; for then we do not really love, but hate our selves; so neither must we condescend to, or indulge our neighbour in the like. We are to provoke one another to nothing but love and good works; for he who approves and allows of that in another, which he cannot approve or allow of in himself, provided the matter of it be without the compass of indifferent things, and within the strict rules of right and wrong, acts very unfaithfully, and very unlike a true friend. And therefore in this part of our

love to our neighbour, there will be room for that brotherly correction, which is so often and so pathetically recommended to us in scripture; *Matth. xviii. 15. If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone, if he shall hear thee, thou hast gain'd thy brother.* And were we all acted by that generous principle of a true Christian love, would one reprove with meekness, the other hear with patience; were Christian honesty and integrity the constant guides and directors of all our conversation, what blessed hopes of peace and union would such a scene of affairs promise us; one neighbour would not endeavour to over-reach and defraud another, because he would consider he was about to do that of which he must be ashamed; and if he lov'd his own soul, that which must bring him to a severe repentance for it. This would teach men to be good upon a true bottom, to love their neighbour as themselves, not for fear of punishment if they should offend him, but out of duty to him who commands them to do so. And this is that love of our neighbour which the schools call the just love of him. But,

3. There is still a love of our neighbour which they call true; that is, we must not love him for our own pleasure, profit,

profit, or advantage ; but as if we truly love our selves we do it for God's sake, so must we love our neighbour for God's sake also. And this is what St *Paul* calls *love unfeigned*, 2 Cor. vi. 6. for when we love our neighbour upon the account of some pleasure or advantage we hope to make to our selves thereby in that case, we do not truly love him, but our selves; and if we were able to compass the same pleasure or advantage without him, our love for him would be quite extinguisht, which shews it to be not a true and real Christian love, but a false and hypocritical one. And therefore in this case to shew our love unfeigned, to clear our selves from the supposition of any sinister design, or base end upon our neighbour, we must be always ready, as the Apostle adviseth us, *to do good, and to distribute*; to assist our neighbour in any of his real necessities, either with our best advice or substance, considering always that all the endowments we enjoy, whether of mind or body, or fortune, are all of them so many talents deposited with us for our improvement; and that if we do not make a due improvement of them when a fair opportunity is offer'd, we cannot expect less than the fate of the slothful servant. How blessed a thing is it to plead the cause of the fatherless and widow ; to see that

the wrong'd and oppress'd have right ; to relieve the needy, clothe the naked, feed the hungry. These acts of mercy will make us such returns, that the God of all mercy will own himself indebted to us for them ; they are such acts of love, as carry with them the promise of this life as well as another, for he who thus uses the good gifts of God afforded to him, shall receive in this world an hundred fold, and in the world to come life everlasting.

To collect then what we have been saying, how fruitful is this principle of divine love ; it guides and directs our duty to God, our duty to our selves, our duty to our neighbour ; it enlivens and invigorates all the actions of the Christian life, even the most consummate acts of Christianity are nothing worth without it ; for as *St Paul* says, *If I give my body to be burnt and have not charity, I am nothing ;* how ought we therefore to labour after and covet earnestly this best gift, especially when we consider, that it will lead us into our best and truest interest, by enlarging our prospect, encouraging our hopes, and giving us a better expectation, than all the desires of this world can afford us ; for suppose a man thoroughly enlighten'd with this principle, was put into the same condition with the rich man in

in the Gospel, fill'd with all the affluence and plenty of this world's goods his soul could desire, yet would he not with him say, *Soul, take thy rest*, lest he should be answer'd with a *thou fool*. Not that it teaches us to despise the good things of this life, which are in their degree valuable, and under the direction of this principle useful too ; but shews us that they are no more than a necessary viaticum, a comfortable provision for our pilgrimage thro' this world, which we cannot without a breach upon common humanity deny to a fellow traveller, when we see him faint and weary, and in want of them. And while our desires are thus indifferently, thus honestly, fixt upon them, they enlarge our prospect, discover to us nobler objects of our love, the beauties, the perfections, the happiness of heaven, and let us see the end of our hope, even eternal life.

Again, are we only fellow travellers in this world, do we all aim at the same journey's end, our heavenly country : then how ought this divine love to inspire us with enlarged thoughts towards one another ; how ought it to engage us in all the possible assistance we can give one another ; for in this case there is no difference between the meanest and the greatest : do I assist my poor brother out
of

of the superfluity of my abundance, he returns me for it spiritual blessings, and helps me forward with his prayers. We are all the creatures of the same Almighty Creator, we are all the redeem'd captives of the same merciful Redeemer, and our eternal happiness is the common end of that creation and redemption too. How ought we therefore to labour in the common vineyard, and with unanimous endeavours strive only how we may make it best answer our Lord and Master's expectation; for we cannot think of dividing the inheritance, unless we first kill the heir, and then we know we shall be cast out as wicked servants.

Let this therefore engage us to lay aside all narrow thoughts and selfish interests, the first seeds and principles of contention and division. We have enemies enough abroad, 'tis neither politick nor Christian to increase them at home; and therefore I wish those our misguided brethren who divide from us, would seriously consider this great and pregnant principle of mutual love; for do we not all hold the same common Christianity; do we differ in any thing, but only who shall serve his Master the most decently; were this contention carried on, without the peevishness and perverseness of quarrel and division, it would then be laudable, it would
then

then only more eagerly engage us to provoke one another to love and to good works, and then we might be sure the God of love and peace would be always with us.

'Tis duty we must know, and duty we must do, or be sure to answer for the neglect of it, people as well as pastor; and therefore give me leave to close all with the repetition of the command we have been explaining; *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbour as thy self. This do, and thou shalt live.*



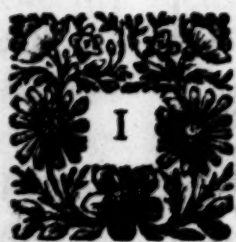
S E R.



SERMON XXXI.

R O M. xiii. 12.

*The night is past, and the day is at hand;
let us therefore cast away the works of
darkness, and let us put on the armour
of light.*



IN this noble epistle to the
Romans, the chief argument
St *Paul* insists upon, is to set
forth the righteousness of the
law of faith, and to shew
them that it is the righteousness of faith
alone, not the righteousness of works,
either by the law of nature, or the law
of *Moses*, that can justify us. For tho'
the laws both of *Moses* and of nature, as
the Apostle tells us, *chap. vii. 14.* are still
spiritual, yet is human nature universally
carnal, sold under sin, and by that cor-
ruption,

ruption, that bondage and captivity, made utterly incapable by the laws themselves, of compassing the spiritual ends of them, the salvation of their souls. For tho' the law may direct us to the substantial duties of the covenant, and an universal, exact, and entire obedience, might have kept us within the privileges of the covenant; yet where a breach of the covenant was once admitted, and an universal infection overspread those faculties which should have follow'd the directions of the law, but by that means were not able now to do it, without the intermixture of many infirmities, imperfections, and sins; there the law has no further power than to kill *i. e.* to condemn us for the breach of it, but is not able of it self to give us any relief, or proposing any method of retrieving that forfeiture, which by this breach of the covenant we had brought upon our selves.

By this management of the argument, *St Paul* endeavours to lead his converts into a self-conviction of their own natural weakness and infirmity. the darkness and obscurity they were under, whilst a self-consciousness of their own infirmities sufficiently convinc'd them, that they could not claim the reward, because they could not perform the work, but found themselves rather by that failure of their duty

liable,

liable, obnoxious, and accountable to the justice of that Power and Authority which has given them the law, by the breach of which they became sensible, that they had brought themselves under the obligation of guilt. Nor could the brightest apprehensions the law was able to give them, for both Jew and Gentile were concluded under sin, give them either light or strength enough to encounter this difficulty they had brought themselves into, or offer to them any comfortable prospect of disengaging themselves from it.

By thus setting forth the weakness and darkness, the imperfection and obscurity of a corrupted state of nature, *St Paul* endeavours the better to represent and recommend to them the marvellous light, the gracious and blessed assistance they may expect from the gospel revelation. And by this account of his argument we are naturally led into an easy and obvious explication of the several metaphorical expressions in the text, *the night is far spent*, the night of darkness, obscurity, confusion; of imperfection, ignorance, and want of saving knowledge, a long, tedious, irksom and weary night is now past: *the day is at hand*, the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow

shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Our Saviour is described in the prophetical Writings, as *the Sun of Righteousness, who comes with healing in his wings*, Mal. iv. 2. and Isa. lx. 3. *The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.* The Prophet Isaiah tells us in the same chapter at the second verse, *Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people.* And St Paul tells us, Acts xvii. 30. *there were times of ignorance which God winked at, but now he commandeth all men to believe in that light,* which our Saviour tells us he is, *John i. 4. I am the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.* So that by night and day here, and consequently by *the works of darkness and armour of light*, we must understand the different states and conditions of mankind under the different oeconomies and dispensations of an unenlighten'd corrupted state of nature, and the bright and clear assistances given us by the Gospel revelation, and consequently discover the force of the Apostle's arguing in these two propositions ;

I. That an unenlighten'd corrupted state of nature is apt to lead us to *works of darkness.*

II. That

II. That the bright assistance of a Gospel revelation, does furnish us with such an *armour of light*, as may be sufficient to oppose and dispel those *works of darkness*.

And therefore now, the night being so much further past than it was in the Apostle's days, the day so far grown upon us, we have the greater obligation to *cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light*. But is the night past! or rather, is it not return'd upon us? Have we not too much reason to say as our Saviour did of the unbelieving Jews, *That light was come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil*; or as St John says, chap. i. ver. 10, 11. *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not*. 'Tis prodigiously unaccountable, that when the Son of God himself came down from Heaven to redeem the forfeiture mankind had made, to purchase for us a reconciliation, and not only to give us light, but assistance too; for He came not only to be *a light to lighten the Gentiles*, but also to guide our feet into the way of peace: it is I say under such advantages

vantages prodigiously unaccountable to find mankind; after so long a possession of them, relaps'd into so fatal a degree of stupidity, that with pride and boasting they can shut their eyes against so clear a light, and refuse the *voice of the Charmer, charm he never so wisely*. This we too plainly see in the open and daily insults and assaults which atheism and infidelity are too freely allow'd to make upon the Christian revelation.

We had a philosopher of the last age, a man of renown in this, who was no way wanting in the brightest accomplishments an unenlighten'd reason could attain to, was endow'd with a more than ordinary strength of natural faculties, and had to these added the experience of a long and easy life, spent wholly in the researches after knowledge; and yet under these accomplishments, because the Gospel was hid to him, *i. e.* he could not or would not receive the light of it; therefore as St *Paul* says, was he one of those that were lost, 2 *Cor.* iv. 3. for even his death-bed reflections, with all his philosophy about him, could give him no other assurance, after all his time and pains so vainly spent in acquiring a mistaken knowledge, but only this wretched one, that he was even still going to take a leap into the dark. Now what idea can be more

confounding, more horrible than this, to a reasonable reflecting soul, too conscious of its own immortality, to have no other prospect for it, but that we are going to plunge it into a dark abyſs of we know not what. And we have, I doubt, at this time too many of this man's disciples, men who live ſo immerſt in the affairs of this life, ſome in the cares and troubles, ſome in the pleasures and vanities of it, as if there were nothing beyond it that could be worth their hopes or fears, their thoughts or expectations.

To theſe therefore it is as neceſſary ſtill, as it was for St *Paul* to his Heathen *Romans*, to open and explain this argument of the apoſtle's, in the two propoſitions already laid down, *viz.*

1. That an unenlighten'd corrupted ſtate of nature, is apt to lead us to *works of darkneſs*.

2. That the bright aſſiſtance of a Goſpel revelation, does furniſh us with ſuch an *armour of light*, as may be ſufficient to oppoſe and diſpel thoſe *works of darkneſs*. First then,

1. *That an unenlighten'd corrupted ſtate of nature, is apt to lead us into works of darkneſs.*

Virtue

Virtue like truth loves to shine in its brightest appearance, open and undisguis'd; where it may be seen, not only in its effects, but principle; for 'tis that alone which gives the true lustre and value to an action. There are many men whose actions bear a fair outside and appearance, whose designs nevertheless when further penetrated into, prove black and hellish, designing only by that fair appearance to deceive and circumvent, or it may be, to ruin and destroy: thus and for these ends we are told the Devil can sometimes transform himself into an Angel of light. If therefore the principle of an action do not appear clear and ingenuous, we have reason to suspect some crooked and sinister design in it.

Now this is the plain reason why a corrupted unenlighten'd state of nature must necessarily lead us into *works of darkness*, for the very supposition implies a corruption of its principles, and the want of that light which ought to repair the decays of that corruption, must consequently suffer the corrupted principle to run head-long after its own mistaken vain designs.

St Paul tells us, *Rom. viii. 6, 7. That to be carnally minded is death, for the carnal mind is enmity against God, be-*

cause it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Now what is a carnal mind! the mind we know in its own nature is a spiritual substance, made only for the contemplation of spiritual objects, and for the guidance, the conduct and assistance of the carnal principle in its enquiries after, in its pursuits and attainments of them.

Whenever therefore the mind, instead of pursuing these great ends of its being, suffers it self to be led away by the prevailing importunities of the carnal principle, then is it that it does it self begin to become carnal. The image of God in the bright endowments of the intellectual nature, wisdom, holiness, and purity, were the condition of the first created soul; wisdom in understanding the one great and only good: holiness in willing and desiring to serve and please, and worship him alone: purity in our affections, which were directed only to the love and observance of them; but when the mind was tempted from this beautiful, this most desirable, this most adorable object, and by the allurements of the enemy was led into the desire of another object, which had nothing in it self of intrinsick value, or in any wise comparable to that they left, for it was only beautiful to the eye, and pleasant
to

to the taste, but in pure contradiction to the laws and commands of that superior Good, they submitted to the lusts and interests of the lower principles, then was it the mind became carnal; then was it the enmity arose between God and it, now become disobedient, and it was no longer subject to the law of God, neither indeed could be.

This deviation of the Mind from it's proper spiritual object, chains it down and engages it to the desires and interests of those objects it is converted to. The bias of it's affections is quite altered; it neither loves, nor hates; hopes, nor fears as it ought to do; but having broke it's dependance upon the supreme Good, loses all the advantages of that gracious influence which might from thence descend upon it, and becomes unfit for; and unworthy of the care and assistance of the heavenly principle,

In this abandoned condition, we may easily imagine the enemy presents it with such entertainments as are now become agreeable, congenial, and connatural, to the corrupted state of it's affections; for when we have broke the law of the supreme mind, we do by consequence break in upon the sovereignty of our own mind, for that must necessarily be first subdued by the carnal principle, before it can

be prevailed upon to refuse it's obedience to the supreme Creator, and therefore does no longer command, but is commanded, or at least cajoled. This makes way for that miserable condition of corrupted nature, which *St Paul* describes in the 7th chapter of this epistle, where the law of the members make war against the law of the mind, and bring it into captivity; for the passions thus grown, not only ungovernable, but commanding, disturb the beautiful order designed by the God of Nature, and run the intellectual frame into a perfect anarchy and confusion.

This is the occasion our spiritual enemy takes to manage the war within our selves, with all the cunning craftiness to deceive; and in this tumult can make the will desire an object proposed by some darling prevailing passion, which if fairly offered by a calm reason, would certainly be rejected by an enlightened understanding. But he who was the author of the corruption to us, knows well the effects of it, can see the crooked bents and inclinations it has brought upon our corrupted nature, and suit his temptations to the bias of them; for all tempers and constitutions are not equally suited to all the kinds and methods of wickedness and enormity,

enormity, which this corruption of our natural frame is apt to bring upon us.

There are some boisterous iniquities which require an harden'd body as well as an harden'd heart and darken'd soul; such are all the acts of violence, rapine, oppression, barbarity, inhumanity, to tempt us to these, which to a calm and considerate reason carry the foulest appearance, that is in nature possible; he arms the more robust passions with such an intemperate warmth, as overbears the considerations of reason, and precipitates the will headlong and blindfold into all the consequential mischiefs that can follow from such a tumult.

Furious anger, which, as the wise man tells us, was not made for the sons of men, rancour, hatred, malice, and unreasonable desires of what is not our own, carry us on to murders, thefts, oppressions of the poor and weak, and all that can be enormous in the corruptions of human nature. But these are not the talent of all, the softer frames and constitutions are not made for such a boisterous tumult, and yet the cunning craftiness of the deceiver has arts and wiles to seduce those, who by the softness of their nature are apt to abhor and startle at the roughness of these more boisterous iniquities and lead them by softer methods

into such *works of darkness*, as are every way as pernicious both to soul and body.

The temptations of pleasure are apt to emasculate the native vigour of the soul; vanity, luxury, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, carry the soul to such objects as give it a nearer and more present entertainment, and will not suffer it to employ it self upon its only happiness, that of another life, because 'tis future and at a distance. A certain softness and delicacy of temper, charms the passions into such an ease and looseness, and these dissolve the soul into such a weakness, that it becomes unfit for the severer thoughts; and whatever looks like duty, grows uneasy and a burden to it.

Hence is it that religion must be treated as a sour morose principle, a check to whatever we have thought the comforts of nature, and therefore not worth our cultivation or encouragement. Hence is it we run our selves uncontroul'd into all that *Epicurean* looseness St *Paul* tells us of, *Let us eat and drink for to morrow we die*. Hence, lastly, proceed those works of the flesh which St *Paul* reckons up in the front of his catalogue; *adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness*, Gal, v. 19.

But

But further, yet even where there is such a natural temper and constitution as abhors the boisterous wickedness, and such a firmness of mind as will not easily be cajol'd by the softness of pleasure, for some tempers and constitutions are naturally more inclined to virtuous dispositions than others; yet even then the enemy is not without his artifice, to lead an unassisted and unguarded mind, into errors and mistakes as pernicious and destructive of its everlasting happiness, as all the fleshly lusts and carnal iniquities can be; for such a soul is apt to be lifted up, and grow proud of its own accomplishments; and while with the *Pharisee* in the gospel it compares it self with others, and says, *I am not as one of these sinners, or as this Publican*, falls short of its true and real justification.

Hence is it that St *Paul* amongst the works of the flesh, reckons up some that are proper, and can belong to the superior faculties of the mind only; such are *idolatry, witchcraft, heresies*, as we find them enumerated amongst the works of the flesh, *Gal. v. 19*. And these are such alienations of the mind from that principle which is the fountain of all happiness, the love of God, and our duty to him, that they bring the mind it self to a state of carnality; and St *Paul* tells us *the carnal*

nal mind is death. Its own elations fill it with notions of self-sufficiency, and the perfections of its own nature; and while under these principles it so behaves itself, as to think it does not stand in need of any divine assistance, by these means it becomes unworthy of and unfit to receive that divine assistance which alone is able to perfect its imperfections, and under that weakness becomes an easy prey to the spiritual enemy, and being prejudicately enslav'd to its own false and mistaken suppositions, is easily led thro' all the various mazes of error here, till it is at last deliver'd into the everlasting chains of darkness.

To instance but in one of these spiritual wickednesses, and shew the dangerous and pernicious tendency of it, we may easily find it in the spirit of infidelity: how many gay out-sides and goodly appearances of virtue are there, where the benefit of a kind nature, and a something more than ordinarily civiliz'd education have form'd the moral man into a beautiful appearance, and yet this very person falls so far short of a good christian, that we can find within nothing but a very corrupt mind; all darkness, pride, obstinacy, and perverseness. He thinks so highly of his own knowledge and understanding, that he despises the
revelations

revelations of his Maker; and tho' he owns him to be a superior, a brighter mind, yet he will not believe him. He is too full of his own perfections to believe the corruption of his nature, and therefore despises the notion of a Redemption from it. All the reveal'd mysteries of the Christian institution, are so many paradoxes, absurdities, and contradictions with him, because his shallow reason cannot fathom or comprehend them. A Trinity of Persons in the one undivided divine Nature, tho' positively reveal'd to us by the Gospel of truth, must be ridicul'd as monstrous and absurd. And thus while he denies the Christian God, he becomes, under a Christian institution, to all intents and purposes an Atheist.

That a satisfaction to an infinite offended Justice, should require an infinite Person for the completion of it; and consequently that our Redeemer must be God as well as Man, to be able to perform that kind office for us, tho' it be the scope of the whole Christian faith, and the foundation of our belief, yet cannot his carnal imagination reach the depth of the mystery. And thus he presumes upon salvation without a Saviour, and denies the benefits of our great Redeemer.

Thus

Thus may the brightest moral endowments, tho' they make a fair appearance of an outward virtuous conversation when destitute of a divine Assistance, lead the mistaken possessor of them, into such spiritual wickednesses as will certainly disappoint him of the great end of reasonable nature, an immortal happiness. And these are the several ways by which an unassisted, unenlighten'd, corrupted state of nature is apt to lead us into *works of darkness*.

Thus we see the weakness, the imperfection of corrupted nature, how many ways and by what artifices the spiritual enemy is able to cajole and lead it astray, from the first principle and fountain of its happiness. It has lost the native force both of its intellectual and moral faculties, and is not answerable for its original duty, either in the knowledge or the practice of it; and therefore it will concern us highly to consider well in the second place.

II. How the bright assistance of a Gospel revelation, does furnish us with such an *armour of light*, as may be sufficient to oppose and dispel those *works of darkness*.

S E R.



SERMON XXXII.

ROM. xiii. 12.

*The night is past, and the day is at hand;
let us therefore cast away the works of
darkness, and let us put on the armour
of light.*

FROM these words we have
already considered the weak-
ness and imperfection of a
corrupted, unassisted state of
nature, and shewn withal
how apt it is to lead us into *works of
darkness*. We are now to consider,

*Secondly, How the bright assistance of
a gospel revelation, does furnish us with
such an armour of light as may be suffi-
cient to oppose and dispel those works of
darkness.*

The

The metaphor here is very expressive, when the Apostle calls it the *armour of light*, for armour implies an external, an additional, or accessional strength to the naked force of nature, and is useful either in the offensive or defensive part of it; assists us either to subdue and conquer, or to oppose and secure us from what may be noxious and hurtful to us. Which shews us further the truth of what has been observed, *viz.* How weak and imperfect an unassisted state of corrupted nature is, and therefore are we here to enquire,

First, What is this armour of light.

Secondly, How it assists us to oppose and dispel the works of darkness.

1st, What is this armour of light.

Light and darkness are metaphorical expressions, which, I think, we may venture to say do universally throughout the whole scriptures, signify to us the notion of knowledge and ignorance. Now ignorance is an imperfection, *i. e.* a negative perfection, or the want of some perfection which ought to belong to our nature, and therefore could not be given us by God Almighty, who could not create us ignorant

rant of any thing we were concerned to know ; because whatever comes out of his hands, brings along with it the full perfection of its kind. And our first parents, we find by the divine history, were created in that full perfection, mature in stature, and ripe in understanding ; but the laws of providence have left their issue to the slow advances of education and gradual improvement, and therefore are they born with capacities only, which under a due culture may be able by degrees to bring them to that perfection.

A laborious and painful education, when by the most happy improvements, it leads us thro' the natural infirmities of childhood, infancy, and youth, to the perfect state of manhood, and in the several stages of it, gives us the several improvements due to each ; strength of body to childhood, letters and speech to infancy, and a fuller preparative instruction to youth. Yet if they are all successfully cultivated, they only prepare the man to begin to think for what end he came into this world, and what is to be the issue of it in another.

But if we consider how the corruption of our nature has embarrass'd even these first elementary perfections of nature, for tho' truth is but one, and the way to attain it, the same in all ; yet do we too
often

often find such varieties of temper, arising either from the weakness of constitution, or from the infirmity of mind, and distortion of the passions, that the best labour'd education does but too often miss of its aim, and does not so much as lead us to the very first principles of knowledge and virtue: And hence is it as we have already seen, that mankind according to their several dispositions, run out into all the varieties and extravagancies of *the works of darkness* and confusion.

Wherefore under this weak condition of human nature it is worth our while to consider, what accessional strength we may have to secure ourselves against these weaknesses and infirmities of our nature; and when we see that natural education cannot do it, which carries along with it the supposition of natural religion too. Whence can we have this accessional light and strength but from revealed religion, by considering which we may easily discover what *the armour of light* is: now revealed religion is the manifestation of such truth, as either had not been needful to be discovered to mankind, had they never sinn'd; or else the recovery and revelation of such truths as they once were in possession of, but by their sin had obliterated and blotted out of the book of nature. As to the first of these 'tis evident,

dent, that if mankind had never sinned, there had been no need of a redeemer to save his people from their sins. But when the sin was admitted, and human nature by that means involv'd in an universal corruption; when the consciousness of guilt kept them under the terrors and apprehensions of an offended, just, and righteous judge eternal, and yet when their own corruptions of their own nature had rendered them unable, indeed incapable, of offering any thing to this offended judge, by way of satisfaction and reconciliation, then 'tis plain that the discovery of such a method of salvation, as neither was within the compass of our capacity to contrive, nor within the power of our abilities to perform, must be such an *armour of light*, as could proceed from nothing else but the same almighty goodness, which did at first create us.

This is such a discovery of the divine Philanthropy, or the inexpressible love of God to mankind, as opens to us even all the secrets of Heaven for the salvation of its creature, and lets us into mysteries which were hid from ages and generations; it discovers to us not only the goodness, the kindness, the beneficence of the divine nature; but shews us also, that in that divine nature there are three infinitely good and divine persons, who all co-ope-

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rate

rate by one indivisible love and goodness for the salvation of lost man. The Father sends his Son into the world to undertake for corrupted human nature, what human nature was not able to undertake for itself. The Son assumes our nature to himself, and, what we were not able to do, preserves it innocent, unspotted, perfect and obedient, and by that means was able to offer it, an acceptable sacrifice, a grateful propitiation and satisfaction for the sins of all mankind. And all these mighty mysteries of love were perform'd by the concurrent assistance of the Holy Spirit, and are discover'd and secured to us by the revelation, the grace and influence of the same Holy Spirit upon us. This opens such a scene of truth to mankind, so very gracious in the design of it, so good, so kind, so beneficent in the proposal; so useful and so advantageous to mankind to whom it is propos'd, that such a love as this, ought, as the Apostle says, to constrain us, and make us willingly believe what we find is thus highly our interest when we do believe it.

This gratuitous revelation of the nature of God, and of his good designs for the salvation of his creature, is such an *armour of light*, as may be sufficient to guard us against all the assaults of infidelity, and all the spiritual wickednesses in
their

their several shapes and kinds, arising from the spirit of infidelity; for downright Atheism in the speculative notion of it, is too abhorrent from the common sense of mankind, who know themselves to be depending creatures, and that they are neither able to give themselves a being, nor to preserve it; and therefore lest this glorious revelation should have its full effect, and secure mankind from that eternal misery, which his alienation of himself from God his maker had made him liable and obnoxious to, it has been the artifice of the crafty deceiver, to indulge his votaries in the belief of some supreme being.

In king *David's* time, the fool durst only say in his heart *there is no God*, but durst not openly profess it; and amongst all the various schemes of Paganism, there is not one that dares recommend to us positive infidelity, and downright Atheism; and therefore do we find the modern christian *Epicurean*, to shelter himself from the ignominy of being thought an Atheist, which is a notion too disagreeable to the common sense and reason of mankind, assumes to himself the modest title of a Deist, and prides himself in owning the being of a God in general, without being oblig'd by the superstitious opinions of any singular religion, tho' at the same

time his life and actions shew, that he, like his pagan predecessor, denies the providence of the God he owns, and takes him to be as idle, as unthinking, as unconcern'd a being, as himself.

But suppose this kind of infidelity, as I hope it is, or at least wish it may be too flagrant to prevail among us, yet our grand adversary the Devil, *who like a roaring lyon goes about seeking whom he may devour*, has various arts to disappoint the efficacy of that faith, which is thus revealed to us, and must save us.

Thus we find from the beginning of the christian revelation even to this day, the most dangerous heresies, which have been broach'd and maintained in the church of Christ, are such as are directly levell'd against the belief of some of the principal parts of this revealed truth.

Thus of old the Anthropomorphites, to countenance the grossness of the Pagans worshipping material things, form'd the idea of God from their own; and tho' the second commandment forbids us to make any likeness of him, either from things in heaven or in earth, or in the waters under the earth; yet do they make him a man of like passions with themselves.

This indeed our modern materialists have not exactly copy'd, but yet their heretical philosophy goes so far, as to endeavour to
destroy

destroy all notion of spiritual being, and not only deny the immortality of the soul, but to make it surely mortal, they make it material too, because upon their principals it must necessarily be their highest interest to believe, that they shall die like the beasts that perish.

Again, in relation to the Son, and those kind offices he undertook for the salvation of fallen man, there have been, and still are, as many heresies which endeavour to destroy this part of our christian revelation, as are the several functions of that dispensation he has undertaken for us. Some have, and do still deny his divinity, some the truth of his humanity, and will not believe a God incarnate, tho' without that he could not have been our redeemer. Some deny the infinite merits of his death and passion, and will not believe that satisfaction made for them, without which they can have no reconciliation with their offended Maker.

Again, in relation to the Holy Ghost, and those comfortable advocations we receive from him, there have been some, and still are, who deny his very being. The *Macedonians* of old are out-done in this point by the Socinians of these times, who because they will not be led into these truths which nature could not give us, but revelation only does assure to us,

they deny the mission of the third person in the blessed Trinity, tho' he was sent to be a comforter who should abide with us for ever, tho' he was sent to bring to our remembrance whatever had been said or done for us, and to lead us into all truth. Some again there are, who tho' they do not rise up to this height of infidelity, yet do in effect deny the mission of this Holy Spirit, because they will not own the grace and influence, the advantageous aid and assistance we have from him, both by enlightening our minds with the discovery of such an object of our faith, and strengthening our wills for our perseverance in it. This was the heresy of *Pelagius* and his followers, and these are fairly copied, if not out-done, by our modern Scepticks, who think it a scandal to their nature to be beholden to the grace of God, and make it the scorn and jest of their conversation.

And these are the several spiritual wickednesses in high places, those heresies which under the colour of Christianity fight the battle of Atheism and infidelity, by endeavouring to undermine and covertly destroy that faith they dare not openly attack. To these are added as subsidiary auxiliary forces, all the corrupters or disturbers of pure religion, of whatever kind they be; for we find it too plainly evident

evident to the great prejudice and damage of Christianity, they do all upon occasion combine against the common faith, which was once delivered to the saints.

The superstitions of some, who tho' they do hold the orthodox faith, yet as *St Paul* says, *they hold it in unrighteousness, and the obstinate perverseness of others*, who tho' they may believe the fundamental articles of the Christian faith, yet for mistaken ill grounded quarrels destroy the unity of that faith; and as *St Paul* says, *would divide Christ*. Both these, tho' seemingly enemies, and at a distance with one another, yet are apt to be so warmly engag'd for their singular and peculiar mistakes, that as we find it by too sad an experience they will chuse to join the common enemy of Christianity, and promote the cause of Atheism and unbelief, rather than they will part with either their abominable superstitions on one hand, or their unreasonable contentions on the other; for 'tis too sad a reflection, but yet too evidently true, and therefore fit to be made, that the divisions and contentions among our selves have not promoted the interest of any other party, but only that of Atheism and Infidelity.

These are then the fiery darts of Satan, with which he combats the truth of the living God; a truth indeed directly level-

led against his kingdom of falshood; for he was a liar from the beginning, and the father of lies; and therefore is it such a truth, as is worth his encountering at any rate; and yet 'tis such a truth as came not by the will of man, nor was consulted with flesh and blood, but was given to us by the gratuitous dispensation of a divine revelation, and therefore is it the shield of faith alone, which is our only armour that can enable us to support the encounter.

St Paul tells us, *Heb. xi. 1.* that *faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* i. e. it discovers to us what our own reason and sagacity could not have comprehended, the wonderful love of God to mankind, in sending his son into the world for the redemption of them; and therefore if we can think the wonderful things discovered to us by this revelation to be worthy of our hopes, we must first believe the revelation, before we can make them the object of our hope. And the triumphs of this faith are nobly prosecuted throughout that whole chapter, to which I refer you, only give me leave to repeat to you, what the Apostle says at *ver. 34.* *Out of weakness they were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.* 'Tis this armour of God which if we do put on, will make make us stronger than

than principalities and powers of darkness. 'Tis thus the day is discovered to us, even the day of salvation, *let us therefore walk as children of the light. Let us magnify the Lord for his mercies, and declare the wonderful works he has done for the children of men.* For thus we see ourselves in possession of such an *armour of light*, the discovery of such a method of salvation as neither was within the compass of our own contrivance, nor within the power of our own performance. And yet such an one as requires no more from us than only our compliance with and belief of it: it was wholly gratuitous on God's part, unexpected and undeserv'd on our own parts; and therefore upon both accounts ought to be the most highly welcome and acceptable to us. We may easily see the advantage of it, by the many various, subtle, and fierce assaults the enemy of mankind has attack'd it by, to endeavour to disappoint the gracious efficacy and design of it; and therefore may conclude it to be such an armour as is well try'd, and of good proof: with which we may venture to meet the great *Goliath*, and be sure to overcome him too.

Let us therefore contend earnestly for this faith which was once delivered to the saints. *Let us fight the good fight of faith* if we hope to enjoy the crown of righteousness

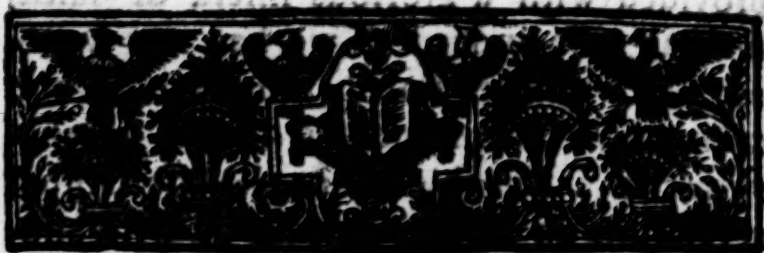
ousness which is laid up for us. We were baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and by that professed to own and acknowledge the several gracious designs and dispensations they undertook for us, and we then promised to become Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto our lives end. Let not therefore when we have well begun, let any thing hinder us in the progress of our faith; let not high thoughts of our selves carry us off from our duty to him who is higher than the highest; let not a wretched pride of heart lead us to despise that Saviour *who therefore humbled himself even to the death of the cross, that he might exalt us to everlasting life.* Let not arrogant thoughts of our own ability and perfections make us undervalue the gracious assistance of that holy Spirit, without whose aid and influence we are able to do nothing as of our selves, for 'tis by him alone we are enabled both to will and do.

Lastly, Let no foolish superstitions destroy the simplicity of this faith, nor any ill-grounded contentions divide the unity of it, *but let us with one mouth, and one heart, praise the Lord for his goodness, and shew his marvellous works unto the children of men.*

Thus

Thus are we by the gospel revelation provided with a glorious shield of faith, such an one indeed as we had not wanted, had we never sinn'd; but such an one as now we have sinned, is highly necessary for us. But this is not all, the Gospel revelation do further furnish us with another piece of the *armour of light, the breastplate of righteousness*, by discovering to us, and recovering for us, those perfections we were once masters of, but by our sin had forfeited, lost, and obliterated out of the book of nature.





SERMON XXXII.

R O M. xiii. 12.

*The night is past, the day is at hand;
let us therefore cast away the works of
darkness, and let us put on the armour
of light.*



IN considering *the armour of light, i. e.* the bright assistances we have from the discoveries of a Gospel revelation, we have found it useful and advantageous to us in a double respect.

First, As it discovers to mankind such a method of salvation, as 'tis true they had not stood in need of, if they had not sinn'd; but such an one as when they had sinn'd, they could not by any other means reconcile themselves to that infinite justice they had
offended

offended by their sin, or compass their final salvation; and this shews us the great and wonderful mysteries of the love of God to mankind, in sending his Son into the world to become a redeemer for us, when we were not able to redeem our selves; which we have already considered and shown, how powerful that assistance is, to secure and guard us against all the various and subtle errors of Infidelity; the next advantage we receive from a Gospel revelation, is to consider,

Secondly, What assistance it gives us for the recovery and restauration of such truths and perfections as we were once by the law of nature, whilst it kept its integrity, in possession of; but by the corruption of sin once admitted, we had impair'd, lost, and obliterated out of the book of nature, for that we were at first created answerable for our duty, is not to be disputed, without impeaching the purity and perfection, the power and the goodness of God; and that we are still under the obligation of duty to our Maker, is what we cannot deny, if we will own the benefit of a creation, much less if we must own the kindness of a redemption; and yet that we are not able either to will or to do any thing of our selves, as of our selves, is what *St Paul* assures us by the authority of a divine revelation,

velation, and if that should not have its weight with us, the daily experimented infirmities of our nature are such, as may be sufficient to convince us of it: and therefore it is our business now to enquire, since we failed of our first covenant, what it is that is required of us by this second covenant, by considering,

1. What is our duty now under a Gospel Revelation.
2. What assistances we have for the performance of it, from that revelation.

Divine revelation tells us, for 'tis difficult now to find it from the ruins of our nature, that man was at first created in the image of God, so *Gen. i. 27. God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them.* This therefore must, as 'tis the nature of an image to do, express as much of the likeness of its original, as the nature of it could, or would allow; and therefore we may conceive the state of innocence to have been such, as gave mankind all the possible perfection they were capable of receiving from a bountiful Creator, whose gracious goodness form'd and adorn'd them with such an original infus'd righteousness,

as gave them an upright spirit, a soul, a body, and all the faculties of them, so fitly temper'd, and so orderly adjusted, that his whole constitution made up such a beauteous frame of holiness, innocence, purity, and wisdom, as was fit to be continued to immortality, by the perpetual inhabitation of the Holy Spirit with it : and for the support of these, the understanding and the will of man, his judgment and memory, were enlightened with such a light of knowledge and truth, his heart and all his inclinations were improved with such a true filial fear and obedience, that he must necessarily love the Lord God his Maker above all things, and desire the enjoyment of the creature no otherwise than as the order of God, and the law of his own nature should require, and so was made a fit and proper instrument for setting forth the glory of God, and promoting his own happiness.

To man created in so glorious a state of nature, it was no hard condition to require from him, a perfect, exact, and unfinning obedience, to all the laws both of his own nature, and of his Creator ; for tho' the work was great, yet were his faculties well proportioned to it, and the reward of the work was so glorious, as to give him further encouragement for the performance of it, by giving him the prospect

spect of immortal happiness, which should support and continue him for ever in the love and obedience of his maker. But when man had sinned, he not only forfeited all right of claim to this reward by his disobedience, by his breach of duty, which was the condition of his covenant, but lost also the integrity of his nature, by his first act of disobedience, admitted that sin which made him for ever after incapable of performing that duty, which was the contracted condition of his first covenant: and therefore when the same goodness which first moved the divine being to proceed to the creation of his creature, engag'd his mercy on our side, and again moved him to such a compassion for fallen man, as to give him a second offer of salvation, by such a method of redemption, as could proceed from nothing but divine goodness, could be undertaken and performed by nothing less than infinite love and kindness. Then was it that the very nature of this second covenant, did alter likewise the nature of man's duty, for this gracious design of Heaven was first to be communicated to us, before it could be understood and embraced by us.

Hence is it that a lively, true, and obedient faith, becomes the principal part of our duty under a Gospel revelation; we must believe first what the gospel revelation

tion offers to us, and then consider what the conditions of that faith are, which must make it effectual to us, and this will shews the present duty of a Christian under a Gospel revelation; for tho' the sin of man made him justly liable to all the severe consequences of his disobedience to the law of God, and left him under the obligation of a guilt, he was in no wise able of himself to satisfy; yet neither could the sin of man, nor the malice of the Devil, which was the author of it, break the force and authority of the divine law, that stands firm upon the everlasting basis of God's infinite justice. And as *St Paul* says, *the law is still holy, and just, and good*, and our obligation to the performance of it is as full still as it ever was, tho' our abilities for that performance are much weaken'd, and unequal to the work: and therefore the conditions of this second covenant are not such as exempt us from the duty of obedience, but only such as provide for us a remedy, a plea for the imperfections of our obedience, which we could not make from any thing of our own, but only from the merits of what our great Redeemer has done and suffer'd for us.

Wherefore the great advantage of the second covenant is, that tho' the law does

still require from us a just obedience, yet even where we are not able to come up to that, there is such a reconciliation, such a propitiation, and satisfaction provided for us, as if faithfully believ'd, submissively rely'd upon, and duly apply'd to our selves, is still sufficient to keep us within the hopes of glory. And therefore in the application of this great redemption to our selves, our faith, which is indeed the principal part of the Gospel condition, yet must not be a single or solitary habit of believing all that our great Redeemer has done for us, but it must be active and lively, it must shew it self in its works, it must, as *St Paul* says, *work by love*: and love, as the same Apostle tells us, is *the fulfilling of the law*.

The belief of those great and wonderful things which have been done for the redemption of mankind, must lead us into such a consideration of the repeated benefits of our Maker, as to make them become to us fresh incitements to our duty, and make us return all the loving-kindness of God bestow'd upon us, in such a love as our Saviour teaches us when he says, *whoso loveth me, keepeth my commandments*. So that obedience is our duty still, even under the Gospel revelation, the only difference is, that it is qualify'd

lisy'd with this kind advantage, that even sin and disobedience shall not be able to disappoint us of our hopes, if they be not obstinately persever'd in, and continued unrepented of. And therefore the duty of the Gospel covenant is such a faith or belief of the great discoveries and wonderful kindnesses our great Redeemer has made to and done for us, as will excite in us a reciprocal love, and engage us to return his kindness to us, in such an honest and affectionate duty to him, and all his commands, as will make us endeavour sincerely to obey them, tho' we cannot perfectly; and yet even this imperfect obedience will proceed the more chearfully, because our faith tells us, there is a sufficient propitiation, sacrifice, and satisfaction offer'd for us, which, when by a lively faith we duly apply them to our selves, will be able to cover and satisfy for our sins and infirmities, and perfect our imperfections.

Thus do faith and works, the belief of what God discovers to us, and a sincere endeavour to do what he commands us, become the adequate condition of the Gospel covenant; not that either of them, or both together, can plead any merit with God Almighty, for what merit is there in believing what God Almighty reveals to

us for our own advantage ; what merit can there be in such works as can pretend to no more than only a sincere endeavour after perfection, wherefore they must both of them rely upon the infinite merits of our Saviour and Redeemer, which are alone answerable for an acceptance with God Almighty.

Thus we discover what our duty is under a Gospel revelation ; let us enquire next,

2. What assistance this *armour of light* gives us for the performance of it in works of righteousness.

And in the first place 'tis a chearful and encouraging assistance to consider, that even our infirmities and imperfections cannot disappoint us of our hopes. If we are sensible of them, if we are sorry for them, if we sincerely and honestly endeavour to do what we are enabled to do, this honest, tho' weak performance, when accompanied with a willing mind, will recommend us to that mercy which sent the Son of God into the world to save sinners.

It must be an abandon'd slothfulness indeed, which will not upon such an encouragement, endeavour to exert it self, where

where we are assur'd that tho' we do fall short and fail in the exact performance of our works of righteousness, yet is Christ become our righteousness, and upon the strength of his merits, we cannot fall short or fail of the expectation of our hopes. Our Saviour tells us *his yoke is easy, and his burthen light*, and it is upon this account we find it so; for when the burthen of the whole duty required from us a just and adequate compliance with it, and every failure in any single instance, made us guilty of the whole law, for this was the law of works, *he that offends in one point is guilty of all*: then was the covenant such a burthen to us, as neither we nor our forefathers were able to bear, *but by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved*, Acts xv. 21. This, I say, is such an encouragement as must leave us inexcusable if we will not throw in our own mite for the purchase of our salvation, when the Lord of life himself has paid so immense and infinite a price for us.

But our duty is yet made easier to us in respect of such works of righteousness as we are to perform by those discoveries of and encouragements to virtue, which the *armour of light*, a Gospel revelation gives us. The corruptions of mankind

had run them into such a darkness and confusion, that all the glorious light of nature they were created with seem'd totally eclips'd, and all the boundaries of vice and virtue blended and confounded. The Heathen darkness led its votaries, even in religious principles, to unnatural and immoral actions, and it could not well be expected otherwise, but that those who had deify'd their vices, should themselves become fond of them, even under the Jewish oeconomy we find there were such as the Prophets were forc'd to denounce wars against them, because *they put evil for good, and good for evil.*

But the *armour of light*, a Gospel revelation, shews us that as our Saviour said in another case, *in the beginning it was not so.* This discovers to us not only the speculative notions of the nature of God, but of our several relations and obligations to him. That faith it begets in us, leads us to our duty to him, and not only discovers all the mists and errors of a false credulity, but teaches us also the true worship of him, as it assures us he is a Spirit and the Father of spirits, so it directs us to worship him in spirit and in truth.

In relation to our duty to our selves, it shews us first the weakness of our nature,
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the causes and the original of it; and then recommends to us, all the private virtues that can enrich, adorn, and embellish our nature. Humility and lowliness of mind, patience and resignation, and whatever may be useful to curb and correct the overflowing tides of our unruly passions, are so inculcated and enforc'd upon us, that they give us an easy assistance, and help us to reduce that disorderly frame of mind, the tumult of our passions had thrown us into; and when we can once begin to act with a calm and sedate reason, when our love and hatred are fixed upon their proper objects, when our hopes and fears are employ'd upon such things as are worthy their concern; then is it that the culture of our private virtues proceeds vigorously, and the man so employ'd begins to make a shining character.

An undisturb'd equality of temper, govern'd and conducted by a steady prudence, gives purity, temperance, chastity, firmness and constancy; and every virtue both of soul and body, such a lustre, that man could hardly appear more beautiful when he first came out of his Maker's hands, than when he is thus modelled by a Christian morality.

Thus the *armour of light* assists us in relation to our duty to our selves: and

in respect of our duty to our neighbour, we have yet greater assistances from it, for compleating the beauties and perfe-
ctions of human life.

The Heathen moralists, and the confin'd principles of the Jewish schools, could never reach the noble and unbound-
ed activity of an universal love and cha-
rity. Gratitude for kindness receiv'd, kin-
dred, friendship, neighbourhood, or some
other selfish respects, were all the foun-
dations they could lay for a mutual love
and charity. 'Tis the christian school a-
lone can enlarge this virtue to those bounds
it was intended for, and make it spread
it self as wide and large as does the boun-
ty of its Author, which is over all the
creation. We are commanded *to do un-
to all men, as we would they should do
unto us*; it extends the efficacy of this
virtue even to our very enemies, because
it supposes there should be no such thing
as enmity among us: and the reason of
this is, because we are commanded to con-
sider one another so, as to *provoke one a-
nother* to nothing else but only *to love
and to good works*; for we are all the
creatures of the same bountiful Creator,
we are all the redeem'd captives of the
same merciful Redeemer, and the common
end both of that creation and redemption
too

too, is only setting forth the glory of our Creator and Redeemer, and setting forward as far as we are able the salvation and happiness of all their creatures.

This should engage us in our unanimous endeavours to the faithful service of so bounteous a Lord and Master, and leave no other strife among us, but only who should serve him best,

Upon this solid foundation we must endeavour to cultivate the society of mankind with equity and justice, with forbearance and compassion for one another, and with all the virtues that can improve a mutual kindness and good will. This will not suffer us to injure and oppress a neighbour, to cheat or defraud him, because we would not have him do so to us.

In short, if we carefully survey all the moral duties and precepts of the Gospel, particularly that divine sermon of our Saviour in the mount, we shall find them built upon such noble, such exalted principles, that we must confess 'tis by the morality of the Christian doctrine alone, that the primitive perfection of human nature is only possible to be retriev'd.

And yet the *armour of light*, a Gospel revelation, is still further ready to give us an assistance even beyond this improvement

ment of our principles, for darkness was not all the misery our corruption had brought upon us, they left our faculties under a weakness and infirmity too, and we were as unequal to the performance as we were to the knowledge of our duty.

The Gospel revelation therefore to assist us in this case too, not only gives us a Redeemer, but gives us the promise also of a Comforter who should abide with us for ever. And this is that Holy Spirit of truth who dwelleth with us and shall be in us, whose gracious influence gives us continual comfort, aid, and assistance, in all our concerns of any moment or difficulty, especially relating to the spiritual world, and the final salvation of our souls. 'Tis true, the operations of the spiritual world are not so easily discoverable to us, who are so much engag'd in the affairs of sense and a material world; but yet if we do as we ought to do, seriously attend the progress of our spiritual concerns, we may easily discover the divine comfort, aid, and assistance of this Holy Spirit, continually influencing our spiritual affairs, strengthening our minds, rectifying our wills, subduing our passions, and leading us thro' all the beauty of holiness, to a nearer prospect of the hopes of glory.

Thus

Thus are we well assur'd that the Holy Spirit, not only is a divine Person, but also that he is our Aid, Assistant, and Comforter; and we may all depend upon the promise made to St *Paul*, that *his grace shall be sufficient for us*.

Thus is the soldier of Christ provided with such an *armour of light* and strength, as may enable him to fight the battles of the Lord against Atheism and infidelity, prophaneness, and immorality. The discovery of his duty is divine, and so is his assistance for the performance of it too. Since therefore in our baptismal covenant, the initiatory sacrament of this new law, we have engaged our selves to become Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto our lives end.

Let us put on this *Armour of light* thus provided for us, and strenuously fight the good fight of faith. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty thro' God, to the pulling down of strong holds, strong holds of sin which our own lusts and corruptions have fortified against us; and therefore it is fighting for our selves, it is only seconding the kind intentions of our merciful Redeemer, who has offer'd to us this method of salvation to rescue us from that captivity of sin and Satan, which our own corruptions had thrown us into.

Let

Let us therefore not only chearfully, but thankfully put on this *armour of light* thus provided for us, and use it so that we may be able with *St Paul* to say,

I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith, I have finish'd my course, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory; which God of infinite mercy grant us all, &c.



S E R,



SERMON XXXIV.

I COR. XV. 20.

*But now is Christ risen from the dead,
and become the first fruits of them that
slept.*



WHEN St Paul at Athens preached up the resurrection, he was mock'd by some, and derided as a babbler, by others; he was look'd upon as a setter forth of strange Gods: all their philosophy could not lead them to the understanding of this mystery, nor could they possibly have any conception of any other being, but such as were material; who had turn'd their very Gods themselves into gold and silver, wood and stone. The most learned amongst them, who were by the undeniable demonstration

ons of natural reason, perswaded into a belief of the immortality of the soul, to defend this their opinion, were forced to fly to the absurdities of a metempsychosis.

They could not conceive how the soul could consist without a body, and therefore by transmigration, shifted it from one body to another, and sometimes did so far debase it, as to invest it with the flesh of brute beasts; for it could not enter into their thoughts, how this flesh when once crumbled to dust and ashes, could again receive moisture and vigour; how dried and disjointed bones could be recruited with marrow, rejoined by nerves and ligaments, or cloathed again with flesh and skin. *Post mortem nihil est ipsaque mors nihil, quæris quo jaceas post obitem loco; quo non nata jacent*, was the celebrated opinion not only of *Seneca*, but of them all.

And this confus'd notion they had of the state of things after Death, when all things were to be involv'd in a perpetual night and silence; their thoughts of utter annihilation, or at least of being reduc'd to their first, that is, to an idle an unactive matter, or to a something that is next to nothing, might well encourage the *Epicureans* and their followers, in that atheistical opinion, which *St Paul* in *ver. 32.*
of

of this chapter, make the just consequence of denying the resurrection, *if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die*: for what inducements can they have to check their pleasure in this life, for the future subsistence of a soul, which after death shall no more be theirs, but shall either perish with them, or pass into another body. But on the contrary, if it be appointed all men once to die, and after that the judgment, how terrible will the appearance of that dreadful tribunal be to the voluptuous person, who shall there find to his great disappointment, that body which he thought dust and ashes, raised up to incorruption and immortality re-united to that soul which was not worth his care in this world, and both together presented to a judge who is of purer eyes than to behold, that is and to approve, iniquity; and thence be cast, with all their spots and stains, not into a purging, but an endless and eternally punishing fire, there to receive the reward of those evil things which they had in this life been in common guilty of.

But this certain hope of the future judgment, this comfortable expectation of the resurrection of the dead, is that which strengthens the Christian man in his course, enables him to encounter all the difficulties of this life, to withstand the temptations

tion of the world, the flesh, and the Devil, makes him with patience to run the race that is set before him, enduring the cross, despising, the shame, looking up to the author and finisher of our faith; *resurrectio mortuorum fiducia Christianorum*, saith *Tertullian*, the resurrection of the dead is the sure hope, and strong hold of the Christians; were it not for this, the dispensations of the Gospel would be a severe dispensation, a hard yolk, or as *St Paul* tells us, in the verse preceeding my text, *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.* In which words the Apostle affirms to us these two things.

First, The resurrection of Christ; already past. *But now is Christ risen.*

Secondly, The resurrection of all mankind which is to come, because Christ is become the first fruits of them that slept, of which in their order. But before we proceed to a particular handling of these two points, it will be necessary, first in general, to premise some things concerning the resurrection. As,

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I. Concerning the truth of it, that there shall be a resurrection which depends solely upon the eternal purpose of God. He hath willed it, therefore it must be.

II. Concerning the possibility of it, which depends solely upon the omnipotency of God. *Quaecunque Deus vult potest, licet non vult quaecunque potest*: whatsoever God wills that he can do, altho' he wills not all he can do. Let us see therefore how God hath in his eternal purpose design'd a resurrection; and this will appear,

1. From the creation of man; for God at first created man immortal, design'd him for everlasting happiness; and whether he was, after a long and uninterrupted obedience here, at last to be translated into glory, as we find *Enoch* and *Elias* were, or whether he was to suffer such a transmutation at the last day from corruption to incorruption, as *St Paul* affirms of those who shall be found alive at the coming of the Lord, of whom he saith, *we shall not all die, but we shall all be chang'd in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*, is not now to be determined.

Since man by his disobedience hath quite alter'd the methods of God's providence, by sin brought death into the world, and by that means made the be-

lief of a future eternal life more unintelligible, than possibly it was at first intended to be ; for tho' God at first did make our bodies out of the clay of the earth, yet is it more than probable that they were never design'd by the ordinary course of nature to return thither : it was man's wilful corruption that brought that state of corruption upon himself and upon his posterity : it was *Adam's* sin made God pronounce that curse upon him, *dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return.*

But from hence to argue, that because death, or the separation of the soul and body, and the corruption of the later, are become the just judgment of God upon sin and disobedience : therefore there shall be no return for the one from its corruption, no re-union of it with the other, were to make the malice of the Devil more powerful than the omnipotency of God himself, or as much as to say, tho' God design'd and created man immortal both in soul and body, yet had the Devil disappointed the eternal purpose of God, by reducing man to a state of corruption, by bringing into the world this dissolution of soul and body, and entire destruction of the later, which is absolute and downright blasphemy ; for God is not as man that he should be deceiv'd : and as our Saviour in another case told
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the Jews, *that God could even out of these stones raise up children unto Abraham*, so must we also say in this case, that God will as certainly out of these dry bones, out of this dust and ashes, again raise us up a body to immortality, as he at first reduc'd it thither. Since this was his design in creating man, and neither the sin of man, nor the malice of the Devil, shall be able to cross or disannul his eternal purpose.

Thus then must we argue, since God in the creation design'd man immortal, since man by sin, and at the instigation of the Devil, hath brought into the world death and the grave, tho' we are not able to raise up our selves from that state of corruption, and God might justly enough permit us to continue in it; yet ought we still to believe that he will one day raise us up from death, since he hath eternally purpos'd and decreed so to do, and that death it self shall be destroy'd, the grave be swallow'd up in victory.

2. It will appear that God hath in his eternal purpose design'd a resurrection, from those many and frequent declarations of his will to this purpose, in his revealed Word both in the Old and New Testament.

And the will of God is so clearly demonstrated to us, concerning this doctrine of the resurrection in the holy Scriptures, that a Jewish rabbi (and they had none

of the clearest notion of the resurrection, as we may guess by the infidelity of the Sadducees) tells us: *Non extat aliquod capitulum Scripturae in quo non fiat mentio de resurrectione mortuorum, tametsi vis nostra non possit illud penetrare*; i. e. there is hardly one chapter in the whole Bible, that does not demonstrate the resurrection to us, if we could but rightly comprehend it: and agreeably to this does *Ruffinus* upon the Creed tell us; *De ipsa resurrectionis gloria, & repromissionum magnitudine, si quis plenius scire desiderat, omnibus pene divinis voluminibus inveniet indicari*; if any desire to be fully satisfied of the glory of the resurrection, and the greatness of the promises thereby assur'd to us, he may find them almost in every volume of the divine writers.

But to come to the examination of some particular places, for all we cannot, they are so numerous; and first out of the Old Testament. The first instance may be that of *Gen. iii. v. 15. The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head*; which phrase *St John* in his first epistle, *c. iii. v. 8.* expounds, *by destroying the works of the Devil*; now the works of the Devil, as *St John* in the same place tells us, *are sin*; the Devil sinneth from the beginning, and the consequence of it death; for he that hath the power of death is the Devil, as
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the author to the *Hebrews* tells us, c. ii. v. 14. Now he that destroys the works of the Devil, or in *Moses's* phrase, *bruisseth the serpent's head*, must destroy sin and death; and that power which destroyeth death, must consequently raise us up to life, death being only the privation of life. And thus doth *Luther* in his commentaries upon this place tell us, in this text is included, *Redemptio à lege, peccato & morte, & ostenditur certa ac manifesta spes resurrectionis, & invocationis in altera vita post hanc vitam*, i. e. Redemption from the law, death and sin, and a most certain and manifest hope of the resurrection, and calling to another life after this.

Thus were our fathers immediately after their fall, by the same breath, which pronounced death upon them, assur'd of freedom from it, and a further resurrection to another life.

The second instance may be that of *Exod. iii. v. 6. I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*. And this is so plain a demonstration of the resurrection, that our Saviour himself made it his own argument to satisfy the impertinent scruples of the Sadducees, and to convince them of their impious infidelity; as we find *Matth. xxii. v. 32.* adding, that tho' *Abraham, Isaac,*
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and *Jacob*, were departed this life long before this declaration, yet were they alive to God, for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

3. We might produce the testimony of *Job*, c. xix. v. 25, 26, 27. *For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the later day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body; yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for my self, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me.* As plain a demonstration of the resurrection as possibly can be, not only that we shall rise with the flesh, but the same numerical flesh also; in that he saith, *whom mine eyes shall behold, and not another.*

4. We might produce that of *David* in his 34th Psalm, *The Lord keepeth all the bones of the righteous, so that not one of them shall be broken.* Tyrants and persecutors may deliver them up to be devour'd of wild beasts, or grind them to powder, and scatter them in the wind or upon the rivers, yet shall the Lord in the day of his revenge call them again to their former place and office.

Upon this text, *Unum ex illis non peribit, One of them shall not perish*, some of the Jewish rabbies built that odd notion of theirs, That there is one bone in
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the spine or back-bone that can never be totally corrupted ; and that God from thence will begin the work of the resurrection : but however their gloss may be false or unwarrantable, yet the text it self is a fair evidence of the resurrection.

To these might be added the dry bones of *Ezekiel*, a most lively type and representation of the resurrection, as well as a demonstration of God's will concerning the truth of it, with many other prophecies of *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and the rest of the minor prophets. But I hasten to those of the New Testament, where we shall find very many, and those very weighty too ; some of Christ himself, some of his Apostles.

Of the affirmations of Christ himself, we may place first that of *Matth. x. 28*. *Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul ; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.* If therefore both the body and soul of wicked men are perpetually to be tormented in hell, 'tis plain by an easy inference, that the body is not perpetually to remain in the grave ; for the body in the grave is not capable of any torments ; nay, 'tis so far from that, that whether it be in the grave, or wherever else it be, if separated from the soul, it hath neither life nor sense ; wherefore

whether to make the just capable of their happiness, or the wicked of those torments due to them, the body must first be raised and re-united to the soul.

The next is in *Matth. xii. 40, 41.* *The men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment with this generation ; the queen of the South shall rise up in judgment with this generation :* now that the men of *Nineveh* and the queen of the South might rise up in judgment with that generation, there must necessarily be a resurrection ; moreover the words in the original do plainly signify it the one ἀναστήσονται, a word proper to the resurrection, the other ἐγερθήσονται, a word which properly signifies awaking from sleep : now death being often in Scripture termed a sleep, the word is here set properly to signify their resurrection from death, their sleep at that time being the sleep of death.

The next testimony that we may produce, is that of *St John, v. 28, 29.* *The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.* And that this place cannot be meant of a spiritual resurrection from dead works in this life, which consists in a real conversion of the heart from the world,
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and the works of it to Christ, is plain, in that such a resurrection agrees only to the just and faithful believers in Christ; whereas here the resurrection is universally affirm'd of all, and the particular ends of it assign'd: the just shall rise to everlasting life, the evil to everlasting damnation.

To these might be added many more testimonies of our Saviour, concerning the will of God in this point of the resurrection, as particularly in the sixth of *John*, where he preacheth up himself to be *the true bread of life, of which if any man eat he shall live for ever*. And at v. 39. of that chapter, he expressly tells us, *This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day*. And so again at v. 54. *Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day*.

But from these let us pass to those testimonies which the Holy Spirit hath given concerning the resurrection, by the ministry of the Apostles, which we may meet with very fully and very emphatically set down, both in their sermons and in their epistles.

The Apostles being appointed to plant the church of Christ throughout the whole world,

world, and being confirm'd in their doctrine by the miracle of Christ's resurrection, did every where, as the foundation of the whole doctrine of the Gospel, preach up Jesus and the resurrection. Thus doth St Paul tell his unbelieving *Corinthians*, *If Christ be not risen, then have you received the faith in vain.* Thus *Acts* iv. *The Sadducees came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead.*

Thus again at *Athens*, as we have formerly noted, did St Paul preach up Jesus and the resurrection. Thus also *Acts* xxiv. 15. where he gives an account of his faith before *Felix* the governor, he expressly tells him, *and I have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.*

Tertullian says of the apostolical epistles, *Ubi notiones præconium resurrectionis inauditæ retro, ipsâ novitate concussit & digna incredulitas in tantæ quæstionibus fidem torquere cepit, tunc & apostolus per totum pænè instrumentum fidem hujus spei corroborare, curavit, & esse eam ostendens & nondum transactum, & de quo magis quærebatur corporalem, & quod insuper dubitatur non aliter corporalem, i. e.* When the novelty of the doctrine
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of the resurrection began to shock the Gentiles, and the incredulity of some made them stagger in the faith, the Apostles took care in almost all their works to strengthen them in the belief of this doctrine, shewing them that it was certainly to be, and was not yet past (as some Hereticks would have persuaded them, interpreting all these prophecies of a spiritual resurrection, and denying any future one, as some amongst us now do) and which was yet more startled at, that it was to be not only corporal, but of these very numerical bodies also.

Such is that place of *Romans* xiv. 7, 8, 9. *For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's; for to this end Christ both died, and rose and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.* Such again is *1 Cor. vi. 14.* *And God both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.* And such indeed is the whole fifteen chapter of this epistle, where by Christ's resurrection *St Paul* proves the necessity of ours against the unbelieving *Corinthians*, as you may find by the chapter it self, and particularly discourses the effect and manner of the resurrection, even so

so far as to tell us what shall become of those who shall be found alive at the last day.

Such again is that place of *St Paul* to the *Thessalonians*, *ch. iv.* where he comforts those who mourn too excessively for the dead, with a lively and elegant description of the resurrection; *If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him; for this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

To these might be added many other places, as that of the *Revelations*, *c. xx. v. 13.* *And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell, or the grave, deliver'd up the dead which were in them, and they were judged every man according to their works.* But from hence it may evidently enough appear, that God hath design'd a resurrection of the body, since he hath made such frequent and full declarations

clarations of his will and pleasure in that particular, both in the Old and New Testament.

The next thing to be premised is concerning the possibility of a resurrection, and as the purposing and designing of it depended solely upon the will of God, so this depends altogether upon his omnipotency.

Since therefore it is evident to us that God hath purpos'd and design'd a resurrection, let us vindicate his omnipotence also from the calumnies of those who would make the resurrection a thing altogether impossible, even with God; for *Damascene* tells us that, *σύνδεσζον ἔχει τῇ πλήσει τὴν δύναζιν*, *Lib. 4. Orth. Fid. i. c.* That his power is correspondent to his will: and so doth the prophet *David* too, *He hath done whatsoever he will both in heaven and earth.*

And tho' indeed there may seem to arise many doubts, or appearing contradictions and impossibilities to us in the considerations of this nature, yet must we not measure the infinite omnipotence by our weak apprehension; we are ordinarily gravell'd in the common phenomena's of nature, discover many thousands of effects whereof we cannot trace the causes; and so short is our understanding, that it was of old pronounced, and may still

still truly be, a piece of great wisdom to know our selves.

Wherefore whenever we meet with any thing wherein our understanding is lost, our reason baffled, let us always be ready to apply, as *Justin Martyr* directs us *ἰσότην λύσιν τῇν πίσιν*, a constant and ready solution of all difficulties, faith. Let us, tho' we cannot persuade our reason to embrace it, nevertheless believe it, because God hath said it, always remembering what our Saviour told his Disciples, *that with man indeed it is impossible, but with God all things*, i. e. all things that he wills or designs to do, *are possible*; for what, alas, is our weak finite nature compar'd with the infinite perfection of the Almighty. It may be impossible to nature, but the consequence is very weak, that it is therefore impossible to the God of nature; for *Irenæus* tells us in his second book *Adv. Hær. Deus melior est quam natura, habens apud semetipsum velle quoniam bonus est, & posse quoniam potens est, & perficere quoniam dives, & perfectus est*, i. e. God is better or superior to nature, willing or designing our resurrection, because he is good; able to do or put into act that design, because he is omnipotent; able to perfect or perform it, because he is rich in all greatness, and Lord of all perfection.

Athena-

Athenagoras in a small treatise of his concerning the resurrection of the dead, tells us that all impossibility proceeds, ἢ ἐκ τῆς ζῆ γινώσκειν τὸ γενησόμενον, ἢ ἐκ τῆς δύναζιν ἀρκεῖσαν ζῆ ἔχειν πρὸς τὸ ποιῆσαι καλῶς τὸ ἐγνωσμένον, i. e. Either from the ignorance of that thing which is to be done, and indeed it is impossible for any man to do that which he is utterly ignorant of, or else from the want of due strength and abilities to perform that which is well known to him, and which he is sufficiently instructed in: now man's power and abilities being finite and limited, it is also impossible for them to go beyond those bounds and limits.

But let us now, according to this rule, see whether the work of the resurrection may be said to be impossible to God, either in respect of any ignorance of it, or any imperfection or inability to perform and perfect it.

And first, can God be said to be ignorant, who is omniscient; can his infinite wisdom be puzzled in the consideration of those things, wherein even human reason it self can find out some glimmerings of light? no certainly, the Lord tryeth the reins and heart; his eye pierceth into the most secret recesses of nature; he seeth how curiously we are fashion'd, even in the lowermost parts of the earth; he num-
bers

bers our members, even the very hairs of our head are known unto him by just tale. It is impossible that God should be ignorant of any the least part of the nature of those bodies which are to rise; he knows where every particle of our mouldred dust is scattered; sees how the dis-solate parts return again to their native elements.

And tho' it be impossible for man to separate again, or distinguish any thing which hath been once swallowed by the universal mass of matter, yet is it certainly as easy for God to discriminate those particles, and reduce them back to their former station and office, from those quiet receptacles of their proper elements, as it was for him at first to produce those elements themselves out of primitive nothing.

Wherefore it was an insignificant piece of malice in those persecutors, who caused the bodies of dead martyrs to be burnt to ashes, and the dust of them scattered, some upon the wind, and some upon the waters, and some to be carried into far countries, to prevent, as they thought, that resurrection which they boasted of; since there is an omniscient and all-seeing Providence which can distinguish them at whatever distance, and shall cause his breath
of

of life to come from the four winds, and breathe upon the slain that they may live.

Nor, secondly, can God be said to want abilities to perform what he doth thus perfectly know and purpose to do. *Quis tam stultus aut brutus est, ut audeat, &c.* saith *Minut. Felix in Octav. i. e.* Who is so brutishly foolish as to imagine, that it is not as easy to reproduce, or reinstate man after corruption, as it was at first to create him. Were we, as some of the Heathen did ignorantly conceive, by death reduc'd to mere nothing, yet such also were we before we were created, and it is as easy to repair mankind out of nothing, as it was at first to create him out of nothing. Moreover, 'tis much more difficult to begin that which never was, than to repeat what hath once been done.

But since all of man doth not perish, his soul being confessedly immortal and void of corruption, the whole doubt recurs to the body, whose parts, tho' some of them do moulder into dust, others dissolve into a moister humour, and others again fly up in steam and vapour, and inhabit the air, by which means our grosser senses cannot discover the place of their abode, yet are they reserv'd to God by the faithful custody of the elements, who is the great Creator and Preserver

both of the elements and us, and to whom they must at last restore them.

And thus much of the certainty and possibility of the resurrection. 'Tis certain, because God hath eternally purpos'd and design'd it, as we find by the many declarations of his will both in the Old and New Testament ; and it is possible, because his omnipotence is able to perfect and perform whatever he hath so design'd.

I should now proceed to consider the two propositions of the text ; but of these at another opportunity.





SERMON XXXV.

I COR. XV. 20.

*But now is Christ risen from the dead,
and become the first fruits of them that
slept.*



IN the former discourse upon
this subject, I did premise
two things to you, concern-
ing the resurrection in gene-
ral; as,

First, Concerning the truth or certain-
ty of the resurrection, and that there
certainly shall be a resurrection I told
you was evident.

I. From the design of God in the Crea-
tion of man : God, I told you, de-

signed man immortal, and tho' the Devil brought sin into the world, and sin death; yet because God's eternal purpose cannot thereby be disannull'd, death itself must at last be *swallowed up in victory*.

Secondly, The certainty of it, I told you, might appear from those many declarations of his will in this point, which I enumerated both from the old and new Testaments, which are strong evidences of God's will in this particular.

II. I did premise something to you concerning the possibility of a resurrection; and I did endeavour to make it appear to you, that the resurrection was possible with God, because all impossibility proceeds either from the ignorance of the thing to be done, or from some inability, or want of strength to perform the thing when known, neither of which, I told you, could, without danger of blasphemy, be affirmed of God; for,

I. Can God be said to be ignorant, who is omniscient; can he who sees and knows all things be at a loss in gathering

thering up a few scatter'd dust and ashes? no certainly; nor,

2. Can God be said to be unable to perform what he thus knows, because he is omnipotent, able to do all things; can the Almighty be puzzled in reducing corruption to a body, who could at first produce a body out of nothing.

Proceed we now to consider the two propositions of the text.

First, The resurrection of Christ; already past. *But now is Christ risen.*

Secondly, The resurrection of all men, which is to come; because Christ is *become the first fruits of them that slept.*

I. *That Christ is risen*, besides the affirmation of the Apostle in the text, is evident beyond dispute; for the very malice of his enemies is as great an argument as we can possibly make use of for the justifying of it. The chief Priests and Pharisees remembering that our Saviour had, even in his life-time, deliver'd something concerning his own resurrection, to secure all manner of frauds and impostures, to prevent his

being stolln away by night, as they pretended, by his disciples, or any of his followers, they go together to *Pilate*, and beg they may have a watch to secure the sepulchre; he grants them it; so they went and made the sepulchre sure by rolling a great stone to the mouth of it, and by sealing the stone and setting the watch, and what could human industry do more to make it appear evidently to the world, that if Christ did rise, it must necessarily be the effect of some divine power; and consequently so we find it, for in the last chapter of *St Matthew*, and from the parallel places in the other Gospels, we find the disciples of Christ so far from designing any such fraud, as to steal away his body, and then preach up his resurrection, that we find most of them doubtful concerning it: and when the women, *Mary Magdalen* and the other *Mary*, came early in the morning, on the first day of the week to view the sepulchre, and bring their spices, the stone which was too mighty, and too safely guarded from them by the watch of soldiers, was rolled from the mouth of the sepulchre, by the ministry of an Angel from Heaven, to the astonishment of them, and the terrible amazement of the keepers, who became as dead men.

But

But neither was this action any cause of the resurrection, but only to shew and demonstrate unto them that he was risen, by opening the sepulchre, and shewing them the place where his body lay, which was now filled only with the grave cloaths, those relicks of mortality and bonds of death, which he had now shaken off: For Christ himself as God, was the sole cause and author of his own resurrection, according to that saying of his, *I have power to lay down my life, and to take it up again.* And tho' it be often said that the Father raised him up thro' the spirit, yet will this be no contradiction to us, if we remember that maxim of St *Augustine*, That *Inseparabilia sunt omnia opera Trinitatis.* August. Enodiv. Ep. 99. *i. e.* that the works of the holy Trinity which are directed to any external elicit act, are inseparable, *i. e.* all the three persons do intimately concur in the performance of it, the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity.

And that this act of raising our Saviour's body was *opus ad extra*, an external, or elicit act, in respect of the Diety, must needs be confessed by all who will not be reckoned of the number of those bold hereticks, the *Theopaschitæ*, who blasphemously affirm'd, that the divinity of Christ suffered death upon the cross, and

by that means crucify'd the God as well as the man.

But there yet remains one thing more to vindicate the resurrection of our Saviour; for when the soldiers were recover'd from their amazement, *they ran unto the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all these things that were done.* The chief priests notwithstanding these convincing arguments, are resolved nevertheless not to believe it, or at least not to have it believed, and therefore do they hire the soldiers with a great price and large money, and promise of immunity if the fraud should be detected, to spread abroad among the people, a report that *his disciples did come by night and steal him away whilst they slept.* And that *saying was commonly reported among the Jews* at that time.

But so thin was the artifice, so groundless the pretence, that it is very probable it never gained much credit any where, for we never meet with it after urg'd by any of those who opposed the resurrection of Christ, whether Jews or Hereticks, as an argument against the resurrection of our Saviour; nor indeed do I see how it could, with any colour of truth, be urg'd against so strong and plain an evidence to the contrary, as could not be denied.

Such as was the affirmation of an Angel to the women, even in the presence of these

these very soldiers, telling them, *he is not here, for he is risen as he said*, Matth. xxviii. 6. and such as were the several appearances of our Saviour before his ascension, as first to *Mary*, and the other women as they were returning from the sepulchre, next unto *James the Just*, the brother of the Lord, who had oblig'd himself, as some authors tell us, not to eat any thing after the Lord's Supper, till he had seen his resurrection; after that to the two disciples, as they were going to *Emmaus*; then to others as they were fishing at the sea of *Tiberias*; and last of all, to five hundred brethren at once in mount *Tabor*.

Now as these several appearances were well known in *Jerusalem*, so were they of force enough to convince that forgery of the Jews, concerning his disciples stealing away his body by night, of falshood; for tho' they had stoln away his body, yet they could not have raised it to life again, and made it appear so often for the strengthening of those that believed, unless omnipotency itself had had a hand in it.

And to shew that these appearances of our Saviour were real, that it was no phantasm, but the body of Christ himself, which was raised from the grave; he conversed with them as formerly, eat and drank with them, shew'd them his hands and his side;
and

and to convince the incredulity of *Thomas*, made him curiously to look into the prints of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side that the spear had pierced; so that the Apostle, no longer able to doubt of the truth of his resurrection, with astonishment cried out, *my Lord, and my God.*

But least some with *St Thomas* should still remain doubtful and incredulous, willing enough to believe that our Saviour himself, being God of infinite power and perfection, might be able to raise up himself from the grave, but cannot thence infer, that our mortal bodies also shall at last be raised up; our Saviour hath left us a fair earnest, and great assurance of this too; for in that horrible agony of nature, which happened whilst our Saviour was suffering for us upon the cross, *the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened, and many bodies of saints, which slept arose, and came out of their graves after his resurrection, and appeared unto many in the holy city, as we find it Matth. xxvii. 51, 52, 53.*

Now this præludium of the universal resurrection, this essay of Christ's in these saints, who rose with him, may be of force enough to persuade us, not only that Christ is able to do it, but that he will also at the last day, raise up the rest of the members of his body, according to
the

the pattern shew'd unto them in these few.

But the Jews, notwithstanding all these things, did still continue obstinate; and when they had once refused to believe *Moses* and the prophets, were resolved not to be perswaded, tho' not only one but many came from the dead.

And thus have we seen the resurrection of our Saviour already past, attested to us by the greatest evidence imaginable; proceed we now,

II. To consider the resurrection of all men which is to come, because *Christ is become the first fruits of them that slept.*

Thus doth *St Paul* argue from the resurrection of *Christ*, to the universal resurrection of mankind at the last day.

The connexion of the Apostle's argument, is taken from a leuitical type, and is thus, *now Christ is risen from the dead*, we shall all rise, for *he is become the first fruits of them that slept*, i. e. as the children of *Israel* were to consecrate the whole harvest, and make it accepted unto the Lord by offering up one sheaf, and waving it before the Lord the day immediately after the passover, as we find it commanded them, *Lev. xxiii. 10.* whereupon was to follow the full harvest: even so hath

hath Christ fulfilled this type, in that upon the first day after the sabbath of the passover, being *raised from the dead*, he presented himself before the Lord as *the first fruits of them that slept*. And by that oblation which was accepted by God, he hath obtained for us an universal resurrection, that the rest of the fruit of the field should be reaped, and the harvest gathered in. Now *the field is the world, the good fruit or seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one. The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels*, as we find them explained *Matth. xiii. 38, 39.*

And thus doth St *Augustine* make our Saviour the priest who took of our flesh, that he might offer it for us a sacrifice, thereby sanctifying the whole mass, thereby assuring us, as he tells us, that *consecrata jam sunt omnia tua, quando tales primitiae tuae de te datae sunt Deo, spera ergo & in te futurum quod praecellit in primitiis tuis*, i. e. that all our flesh is consecrated to the resurrection, in that the first fruits of it are offered to God, and accepted in and by Christ.

We may therefore hope and believe, that that shall come to pass in all of us, which we see already done in those our *first fruits*: many other reasons there are
which

which confirm the connexion of this argument to us; as,

1. That of *St Paul*, in the verse immediately following our text, which is, *argumentum ab opposito*, since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. i. e. as *Adam* by sinning not only merited death himself, but involv'd all his posterity in it also. As his sin and the consequence of it, death was derived down to succeeding generations, by carnal propagation. So our Saviour by perfect obedience, and unerring righteousness, not only broke the bonds of death himself, but became also the fountain of life to all others, and communicated it to all succeeding posterity, by a spiritual regeneration. Nor indeed is it reasonable that the obedience of *Christ* should be of less efficacy, or for the redeeming us from death, than was the disobedience of *Adam* for the involving us in it.

2. *From the triumph of Christ*; *Christ* was raised up the third day, a triumphant conquerour over death and hell, according to that of *Psal. lxxviii. 1. Let God arise and let his enemies be scattered*; of which enemies as *St Paul* tells us, *the last that shall be destroyed is death*. When he shall come attended

attended with his noble army of saints and martyrs in his heavenly kingdom; and finally compleat and consummate that victory which he so happily began at his own resurrection, attended with those few whom he led in triumph, from out the dominions of death.

3. *From the perfect price which he hath paid for our redemption.* For as a Fidejutor, or one that is bound and imprison'd for another's debt; if he be freed from his imprisonment with honour and credit, it is evident to all, that the debt for which he was bound is satisfied, and after that it were injustice to detain even the person for whom he was bound, since the debt is paid.

So our Saviour being freed out of his prison, the grave, with honour and glory, and set down at the right hand of the Father, it is evident that he hath satisfied for our sins, and purchased our redemption; for so doth St Paul argue with his *Corinthians*, *If Christ be not risen, ye are yet in your sins; but if Christ be risen, then is the price paid, then is our sin satisfied for, and the grave no longer becomes a prison to us, but a dormitory or place of rest till the day of the Lord.*

4. *From*

4. *From the relation between the head and members.* God raised up Christ, (as St Paul tells the *Ephesians*, chap. i. ver. 22.) and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body. If therefore the head was raised up, by consequence the members also must follow, for if the body be divided from the head, it ceaseth to be any longer the body of such an head, and becomes an useless and dead trunk. So doth St Gregory tell us, *cum videmus caput hominis super aquas extare, non dubitamus reliqua membra emerfura.* If the head can but keep itself above water, there is no doubt but the other members may quit themselves of the danger too. The head is the great repository of life and action, from thence are diffus'd those vital spirits which animate the whole body.

And such will be the influence that Christ, our head, will have over us, if we do but carefully preserve ourselves members of his mystical body, till at length he raise us up to life eternal.

But let not impious and wicked men hence conclude, that because they are not, nor will they be, members of Christ's body, that therefore they shall have no resurrection; for let them understand that Christ will appear to them in the last day, under
another

another notion, not as a Saviour, but as a judge, and that he will raise them up to life eternal, but that to be employ'd in endless torments.

And as to those who are indeed incorporated into Christ's body, but yet do here offend the head, become rotten and useless members, they must be cut off also and thrown into the fire.

5. *From the sovereignty and power of Christ.* Christ was raised that he should be the eternal king and governour of his Church, so *Rom. xiv. 9. To this end Christ both died, and rose and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living:* and so do we profess in our creed, to believe that Christ will come to judge both the quick and the dead.

Now therefore if Christ was raised to be an eternal king over his Church, his subjects certainly, which are the members of his Church, must not be suffered to perish in the grave, but must be raised up again at the last day, that they may be eternally his subjects; for otherwise he cannot be eternally their king.

And these reasons we have here laid down, may, I think, be of weight enough to enforce the consequence of this argument, *Christ is risen, therefore we shall all rise.* Since therefore it is evident that there

there shall be a resurrection in general, that our Saviour hath in part manifested the truth of it to us by his own resurrection, and the resurrection of those saints and holy men who were raised up with him, and thereby given us an assurance that we shall also rise at the last day.

The next thing to be considered, is of what kind this resurrection shall be, *i. e.* whether of the same bodies or of others, for as concerning the soul, that being immortal, there can properly be said to be no resurrection of it; it always remains perfect in its own essence, whether in the body or separated from it, expecting the day of the Lord, when it shall be consummated and re-united to the same body again; and that the body must be numerically the same, is evident not only from the pattern of our Saviour, who was the first born from the dead, *primogenitus mortuorum*, as he is called in the Apocalypse, who was so far raised with the same numerical body, that he shewed to his disciples, the prints of the nails in his hands, and the piercing of the spear in his side.

But some may say it was an easier matter for him to rise with the same body who was not suffered to see corruption, whose body was not crumbled to dust and ashes, but as fit a receptacle for him at his taking it up again, as it was at his laying it down;

but can these men confess that God is able to restore life to dead limbs, recover the distracted spirits, and set the stagnated blood in motion ; and can they deny him ability to gather up a few scatter'd ashes, if we suppose them scattered over all the world in different and most distant places, let them also suppose that God is ubiquitary and omnipresent ; if they suppose them confounded and intimately immixt with other substances, as of fishes or wild beasts, let them consider that all things have their being from, and dependently of God, and must render them back at his command ; nor will that objection serve their turn, that it is easier to create a new body, than thus to search out and discriminate the scattered pieces of the old corrupted one. For,

First, It is not easier with God, all possibilities being equally easy to him whose power is omnipotent, and whose abilities are perfection itself. Nor is it

Secondly, Agreeable to his justice, that since a body must be re-united to the soul, he should rather create a new one than raise the old one ; for God being just, nay justice itself, there is nothing good which he leaves without a reward, nothing bad which he leaves without punishment. *Nil immune boni bonis futurum nil impurum mali*

mali malis futurum, wherefore God's exact and perfect justice requires, that since the body was joined to the soul, in all those actions which are to be accounted for at the resurrection, since they were all done by the ministry of the body ; nay, the body doth sometimes get the mastery too, and hurries the soul often into actions beyond her own propensity ; this I say being the case, that the soul acts nothing without the body, nay sometimes is captiv'd and made a slave to the brutal part of the body, 'tis but equitable that divine justice in dispensing rewards or punishments, should have a due regard to the whole composition, which is as much the body as the soul, that hath merited the one or the other ; and to this purpose saith *Tertullian*, *Quam absurdum, quam vero & iniquam, utrumque autem quam Deo indignum, aliam substantiam operari aliam, mercede fungi, ut hæc quidem caro per martyria laxiatur, alia vero coronetur, item è contrario hæc caro in spurcitiis volutetur, alia vero damnetur*; i. e. how absurd, yet how unjust a thing it is, and consequently how unworthy a just God to do, that one body should undergo the toil and work, and another should enjoy the reward ; that one body should suffer the tortures of the rack, or be torn in pieces by wild beasts, and another be crown'd with a crown of martyrdom ; or

on the contrary, that one body should enjoy the good things of this world, wanton itself way in pleasure and luxury, and then another body should be damn'd for it: wherefore laying aside all curious questions, it must needs be that we rise with the same bodies.

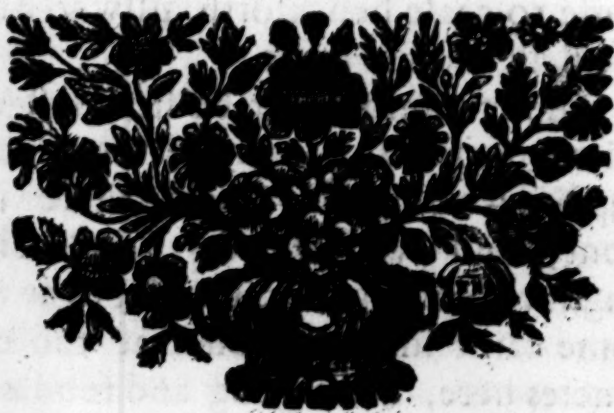
Our Saviour hath by his example shew'd us, that it must be so, God's justice requires that it should be so, and our creed enjoins us to believe that it will be so: only we must understand thus much further, that our bodies *shall be changed*, as St Paul tells us, not in respect of the substance, but in respect of the quality. *They shall be sown in dishonour, they shall be raised in glory: they shall be sown in weakness, they shall be raised in power; they shall be sown natural bodies, they shall be raised spiritual bodies*; and least any should ignorantly mistake these natural and spiritual bodies, for different and specifical substances, he tells us in express words, pointing out as it were his own body; that it is *this corruptible*, not another, *must put on incorruption, this mortal must put on immortality*; our bodies shall be so spiritualiz'd as to become fit and commodious habitations for the soul, in the enjoying that heavenly vision.

And as our Saviour told the Sadducees, that *in Heaven there is no marrying, nor giving*

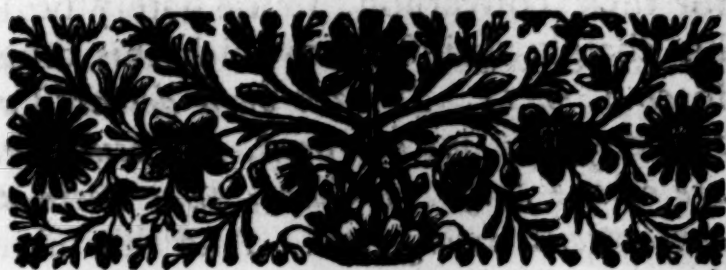
giving in marriage; so may we tell the voluptuous person, that in Heaven there is no eating and drinking: for as marriage was ordained by God, to repair by propagation and succession, the continually decaying parts of the world, so are eating and drinking, nature's instruments by nutrition and aliment, repair those fluid parts of the body, which are continually moving towards corruption; but when our bodies shall be changed, nature shall be no more, we shall hold our existence from the spirit of God himself, a principle that can never fail, a principle so truly spiritual, that it shall cause to cease henceforth all war between the flesh and the spirit.

Since therefore our bodies must thus be raised up spiritual bodies; since this is a happiness beyond which there can be none, and which every good Christian ought to endeavour after, let us at least by some faint imitation offer at those excellencies here, mortifying and subduing the carnal principle, making it as tame and tractable as may be, and altogether complying with, and obedient to, the spirit; let us raise up our souls here by a spiritual resurrection from dead works, labour that they be, and continue in, a regenerate state, and not bury them in that worst kind of grave, the carnal affections and lust, which is the most dangerous death imagi-

nable; which if we shall compass in this life, then may we truly say with St Paul, *Phil. iii. 20, 21. That our conversation is in Heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*



S E R-



SERMON XXXVI.

I COR. iv. 5.

*Therefore judge nothing before the time
until the Lord come, &c.*



THE Apostle's design in this epistle, is to reprove his *Corinthians* for several irregularities and faults which were among them; the chief of which, for so they seem to be, 'because they are first and longest insisted upon by the Apostle, were their divisions and contentions. For tho' the fault of the incestuous person was of a blacker dye, yet was it only a personal crime, and could not either in its effect or influence, be so pernicious to the Church as those were; St *Paul* therefore after his

usual salutation and thanksgiving to God for their conversion, immediately begins his charge against them with this crime, so *ch. i. v. 11. It hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.* And this subject does wholly entertain the Apostle till the end of the 4th chapter, save only that we meet with one of his usual interruptions in the later end of the first; and throughout the whole 2d chapter, wherein he gives them an account of his first conversion of them; and then in the beginning of the third, resumes his discourse again. This fourth chapter being therefore conclusive of that subject, it must certainly, according to the usual method of the Apostle, contain a closer application of such things as he thought most necessary, for the curing of that inveterate disease of schism and contention: his method of arguing with them seems to be this.

In the first verse he lays before them the dignity of the pastoral office, *Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.* In the second, third, and fourth verses, he sets down that eminent perfection which ought to be conspicuous in those that bear that sacred character, *viz.* that they be so far from being liable to be

be faulted by others, that they ought not to be conscious of the least fault to themselves; but with all insinuates, that tho' they should be in some measure faulty, for mortality can no more attain an infallibility in practice, than it can in opinion; *yet are they the Lord's servants, and he that judgeth is the Lord*; wherefore at the fifth verse the present subject of discourse from these premisses, St Paul infers the duty of the people. *Therefore judge ye nothing before the time until the Lord come, &c.* that is, no prejudices, no slight dislike, nay in many cases not a real fault, can justify a Christian in such a censure; such a reproach of his pastors or governours, as drives him on to open contentions and divisions.

This is a short account of the Apostle's reasoning for unanimity and agreement, which will be plainer and easier understood, if we shall give you,

First, An historical account of the rise and occasion of this schism.

Secondly, Apply the several parts of this reasoning, to the several circumstances of that division. And,

I. To give you an historical account of the rise and occasion of this schism.

St

St *Paul* having finished his designs at *Athens*, as the history of the *Acts* tells us, came to *Corinth* while *Gallio* was Proconsul of *Achaia*, which was towards the later end of *Claudius*; where having preached the Gospel for a year and six months, he had in that time, according to a promise made him by God in a vision at his first coming thither, see *Acts* xviii. 10. converted *much people in that city*. Now as 'tis very little probable that this schism should arise while the Apostle was present with them, so is it plain it did not till after his departure; for he himself tells us, in the beginning of his epistle, that he heard of it *by those which are of the house of Chloe*.

After the departure of St *Paul*, *Apollos* came to *Corinth*, whose name we find these tumultuous *Corinthians* made use of to support a party; *some were of Paul, some of Apollos*, but yet we must not date the beginning of this schism, either from his coming thither, or during his abode there; for as 'tis very improbable that a person of his character, so zealous for Christianity before, and so eminently endu'd with the gifts of the Holy Ghost afterwards, should encourage a breach of this nature; so are we plainly told, that he did not promote a distinct conversion from St *Paul*, but
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only help'd them much who had believed thro' grace, *Acts* xviii. 27. agreeably to that speech of St Paul's, who saith himself planted, *Apollos* only water'd.

The beginning therefore of this schism must not be dated, till after the departure of *Apollos* from *Corinth*, which was while St Paul was at *Ephesus*, For *Acts* xix. 1. we are told while *Apollos* was at *Corinth*, Paul came to *Ephesus*, where he staid two years and upwards, see *ver.* 8. and 10. of the same chapter, now during this stay of the Apostle's at *Ephesus* or in *Asia*, before his journey into *Macedonia*; the Right Reverend and Learned Bishop of *Chester* believes that *Apollos* came to him, and after him some other of the *Corinthian* brethren, those possibly of the house of *Chloe*, who giving him an account of this division amongst them, he did from that place direct this epistle to them; nor do I think the common subscription of it from *Philippi* in *Macedonia*, sufficient to destroy this account of it, as being itself of doubtful credit, wanting in many, and some of the most considerable manuscripts, especially the *Alexandrian*.

Thus much for the rise of this schism; the occasion of it will deserve a more nice enquiry, for we are not here concerned with the Gnosticks or Judaizers, who are by most interpreters made the common troublers

troublers of that age of the Church, but with a sort of men, who are by a late judicious author, aply enough called *Pneumatici*, men of a pretence to a greater spirit of holiness than their brethren, whose spiritual pride triumph'd over their Christian humility; whose knowledge so puffed them up, that their charity could not edify, nay so far were they from building the Church of Christ, that they were ready to tear and break it to pieces.

Now to understand these the better, and withal the occasion of these heats among them, we must look back into the very infancy of the Church, and there distinguish the time of its plantation, from the time of its establishment, for the Church (especially in that notion of it which relates to schism) being a body or society of people united together by common bonds or rules for the service of God, there must necessarily be first a conversion of people to the state of Christianity, before there could be a perfect establishment of any Christian society: but for the state of conversion, it was necessary that there should be some extraordinary helps and assistances, for Christian religion being neither recommended by any worldly advantage, nor proposing any thing of that nature as to this life, but only greater benefits in the life to come to those that would embrace it;

it; it was requisite there should be a good assurance given, not only of the truth, but certainty of these things, by some miraculous effects, which might at once both astonish and convince any unprejudic'd spectator, that the divine omnipotence itself was really concern'd for this way of worship.

Thus the first remarkable conversion to the faith of Christ, was occasioned by that miraculous gift of tongues, which was given to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost; upon which occasion *St Luke* tells us, *there were added to the church about three thousand souls*: nor were these extraordinary gifts peculiar to the Apostles only, but during the state of conversion were common to all the believers.

Thus throughout the whole story of the *Acts*, we hardly meet with one baptism, but we find some extraordinary descent of the Holy Ghost following it; so in the case of *Cornelius*, and what is more notorious in the conversion of the whole city of *Samaria* by *St Philip*, when the Apostles came down and laid their hands on them they received the Holy Ghost: and thus *St Paul* tells these *Corinthians*, not only that he did not come to them with the words of man's wisdom, but with the demonstration of the spirit and of power,
but

but also that even they were enrich'd with all gifts, with tongues and mysteries.

These were glorious benefits to an infant Church, yet such as were design'd rather to further the estate of its conversion, not to hinder that of its establishment; for the reason which *St Paul* assigns, why these extraordinary gifts, these miraculous *χαρισματα* were given, seems to carry us no further than the state of conversion; they were given, saith he, *Eph. iv. 12.* πρὸς τὴν καλῶς ἔχουσαν τὴν ἀγίαν, for the perfecting the saints, which *καλῶς ἔχουσαν* being metaphorical, will be easier understood, if we consider it in that primitive sense from whence it was translated, and that *Galen* tells us, is Ἡ Μεταγωγὴ τῶν ὁσῶν ἐκ τοῦ πᾶτος φέρειν εἰς τὴν κατὰ φύσιν; the restoring a disjointed member to its natural place in the body again.

Now both Jew and Gentile having estrang'd themselves from the true Church of God, this was the only method of re-joining and re-uniting these broken members to the body of Christ; and the reason express'd in the later end of the same verse, which is likewise metaphorical, doth further confirm this to us: they were given πρὸς ὁικοδομὴν for the edification, the building up the body of Christ.

Now the building must necessarily refer to the state of conversion, the state of establish-

establishment being concern'd in nothing but only the final complement, the finishing of it. And thus from this account of the reason and end of those gifts, 'tis plain they were design'd only for the state of conversion; which gifts as they were highly useful to that end they were design'd for, so were they by the imprudent management of some persons, made the unhappy occasion of those troubles which we here find the Church of *Corinth* involv'd in.

For as it cannot be supposed but that St *Paul*, during his eighteen months preaching among them, (which time may reasonably be allowed for the state of conversion to that particular Church of *Corinth*) should have collected a great number of converts to Christianity; so may it seem highly probable, and is, I think, very evident, both from the nature of the thing, and from several parts of this epistle, that the Apostle neither would, nor did leave so considerable a number of converts, without first uniting them into such a body or society, as was most agreeable to that unanimity of worship which they were to pay to the one true God, where all things were to be done *ἐν ἑνότητι καὶ ἑνὶ ταῖς*; the doing which must necessarily give a preheminance or precedency to some above others:

thers: for tho' they might be all converts, yet they could not be all governours. Helps of government was but one of the many gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, and it cannot be supposed any more agreeable to the wisdom of that Spirit, than it is to the nature of the thing; that that grace should be communicated to many.

Hence some of those *Corinthians*, who according to the natural infirmity of mankind, were proud of such things as they thought excellent or eminent in themselves, and who therefore had been accustomed only to the unlimited power of an Apostle, could not brook to submit to such governours to whom they thought themselves equal at least, if not superior, in spiritual gifts; and that this was the occasion of this schism, is manifest not only from St *Paul's* character of them quite thro' this whole epistle, wherein he blames them for their too much boasting, their too highly valuing themselves upon their spiritual gifts; and that the last verse of the twelfth chapter, bids them if they must be seeking after spiritual gifts, to covet earnestly the best gifts; and so in the chapter following pathetically recommends unto them the gift of charity. It is, I say, manifest not only from this account of St *Paul's*, but also from St *Clement of Rome*, who was the Apostle's successor not only
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in time but argument too. For not many years after the Apostle's death, he writ an epistle to the Church of *Corinth*, then again tumultuous, or else, which may seem probable from the likeness of the schism, from the Apostle's time till then continuing so. In which he makes it the whole scope of his design, to set before them the miseries and mischiefs of emulation and contention; and doth somewhat plainer than the Apostle blame them for making their spiritual gifts a pretence of disobedience to their ordinary governours. And lastly, like a true disciple of St *Paul's*, inculcates to them that golden rule, Ἀγάπη χάρις αἰεὶ ἐκ ἐκ Ἀγάπη ἔσται ἀζῆ: Charity will have no schisms, admits of no seditions. And this I take to be a true and impartial account of the original of this *Corinthian* schism, in which we find those very gifts that were given for the edifying, the building of the Church of Christ, by the imprudent management of some indiscreet persons employ'd to the ruin of it. Wherefore our next task will be,

II. To explain and apply the Apostle's reasoning, whereby he endeavour'd to heal and make up these breaches of the Church again.

This unhappy emulation, being thus by the indiscreet zeal of some persons, im-

prov'd into an open breach, to convince them of the folly and sinfulness of it, St *Paul* makes use of such an argument, which as it is not temporary suited only to that time and occasion, but standing and conclusive in all ages and states of the Church, so will the enquiry into it be the more generally useful and beneficial; and it is this. *The pastors which are set over you are the ministers of God*, ver. 1.

But the ministers of God, are to be judged by God only; *i. e.* in relation to that service they do for him, v. 3, 4.

Therefore judge ye nothing. Or therefore they are not to be judged by you. Now first for the explication of this reasoning, we shall consider every proposition singly, and with all the evidence, the weight and force of it, as it relates to this controversy of the *Corinthians*; and then secondly, apply the whole not only to them, but to ourselves. The first or *major* is,

1. *The pastors which are set over you, are the ministers of God*; which St *Paul* expresseth somewhat more largely at the first verse of this chapter, in these words. *Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.*

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From which words it is observable, that the Apostle takes upon himself the cause of these despised pastors, looking upon the contempt, the affront done to their authority, as reflecting and redounding to the contempt and affronting of his own: and therefore joins himself with them, as really concerned in the same cause, *let a man so account of us.* For as our Saviour, who was sent by the Father, did in like manner send the Apostles; even so did the Apostles, who could no more continue here on earth for ever, than our Saviour could, send others; so that the Bishops, who were truly the Apostles successors, did as really succeed them in their divine mission, and fullness of ordinary authority; as the Apostles themselves did succeed Christ. And that this was the constant opinion of the earlier ages of the Church, concerning the derivation of this right or power, might be prov'd by a long deduction of authorities from the most considerable writers thro' every century. But I shall at present trouble you only with the opinion of *Clarus a Mascula*, quoted, tho' I think not refuted, by St *Austin*, in his 7. *Lib. de Baptism. contra Donatist*, c. 43. who says, *Manifesta est sententia Domini nostri Jesu Christi Apostolos mittentis, & ipsis solis potestatem a patre sibi datam permittentis;*

quibus nos successimus eadem potestate ecclesiam Domini gubernantes: where I have chosen to render [*eadem potestate*] by ordinary authority, because as 'tis plain that the extraordinary apostolical *χαιρὶς ἀλά*, did in great measure cease with the Apostles, so have we, I think, already proved, that those were design'd only for the planters, not the governours, of the Church. And tho' the Apostles received their mission immediately from our Saviour, yet was it not necessary that their successors should, it being an own'd maxim by all people, that the legality of a just conveyance is placed in those, who are in present possession of the true right. But that the Apostles were in present possession of a true and just right, is evident from Scripture, *viz.* from that commission of our Saviour's given unto them, and therefore they might convey it unto their successors.

The weight therefore and force of this proposition, lies in St *Paul's* asserting this divine right of these ordinary governours, and implies thus much; that altho' the *Corinthians* had been converted by St *Paul* himself, and consequently all of them endued with many and great spiritual gifts and graces, yet were they not upon the account of these extraordinary gifts, to exalt themselves above ordinary governours, or
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to look upon them (especially after the apostolical designation of them to that office) any longer only as fellow subjects, but rather as persons endu'd with a divine power and authority, for the governing and directing of them in the ways of the kingdom of God. They are indeed the ministers, the servants of God, but the governours the pastors of the souls of men.

2. The *minor*, or second proposition is this; *but the ministers of God are to be judged by God only, i. e.* in relation to that service which they do for him. St Paul having in the former proposition, asserted the divine authority of these governours, might very well assume in this second, that they were accountable for the exercise of this authority, to him only that gave it; and therefore saith he at the third and fourth verses, it is a small, an inconsiderable thing to me, *that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment*, nay I do not judge myself. For tho' I am not conscious of any thing evil in myself, yet am I not therefore justified, *but he that judgeth is the Lord*: not that this immunity is to be taken in so large, so universal a sense, as to be thought to give any countenance to that unchristian liberty, which some persons, I wish I might for the honour of Christianity say not Christians, have pre-

tended to, for the breaking in upon the prerogatives of the civil power. For the Christian priest is as much a subject after the susception of that character, as he was before ; and as this immunity cannot exempt us from the judgment of the civil, so neither can it from the judgment of superior officers in the spiritual kingdom of Christ. Both these judgments being in a true sense, the judgment of God, inasmuch as the commission whereby they are directed, are of divine appointment ; for the true understanding therefore of this proposition, we must consider that the persons with whom *St Paul* doth here argue, were in neither of these capacities, but were indeed, or ought to have been, themselves subjects ; for this argument is levell'd at the separating *Corinthians*, which were the laity, whose duty it was, charitably to have communicated with, and as much as in them lay to have maintained the peace of, the Church ; and not upon the pretence of any undue exercise of their ministry, or what is worse, upon a proud presumption of their weakness or insufficiency, to have divided communion from them ; for these were things which did not fall within their judgment or censure. And therefore as *St Paul* in another case argues with his *Romans*, *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant ?*

servant? to his own master he must stand or fall. This is the weight or force of the *minor*, or second proposition, from the establishment therefore of these two, *viz.*

First, That the pastors of the people are the ministers or servants of God.

Secondly, That the ministers of God are to be judged by God only, or by such as he hath appointed to that office.

St *Paul* directing himself to the laity of *Corinth*, might very reasonably, and with very good consequence infer, *Therefore judge ye nothing.* St *Clement of Rome*, writing to the same *Corinthians*, upon the same subject, after having distinguished the the several functions and offices of the Clergy, according to the Jewish Hierarchy, lays down this rule for the laity, 'Ο λαϊκός άνθρωπος λαϊκῶς περιστάσει δέδωται; the laymen are bound by those precepts which concern the laymen, *viz.* honestly to do their duty both to God and men in those places and stations, in which it shall have pleased the providence of God to fix them; not judging and censuring, and upon that account dividing communion from their lawful spiritual guide; but whatever he be, resolving still within themselves, as far as

possibly they can, to maintain a conscience pure and unspotted before God, which I am sure he never can do, who is guilty of an open schism.

This is St *Paul's* conclusive argument for unanimity and agreement, and these the principles from which it is drawn, which are, I think, as solid as they are evident, useful, and pious. For what tho' these *Corinthian* brethren might not only pretend to, but were also really endu'd with, many excellent and spiritual gifts, yet could this give them no pretence to the invading such as were never bestow'd upon them; and our Saviour has taught us, that the only way to gain another man's talent, is by diligently and industriously improving our own; since therefore there are diversities of gifts, differences of administrations, yet is there but one Spirit; and these are given to work us up to such an unity of worship, *that we may hold the faith in the bond of peace*, we are not so much to pride ourselves in the excellency, as to consider the usefulness, the true end and design of them, which is to build up, not break in pieces, the Church of Christ, which is his body.

There is but one considerable objection which lies against this way of reasoning, and that is, if it be our misfortune to be educated

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ted in a communion which is evidently sinful, nay perhaps plainly idolatrous, we cannot by these principles, unless our governours will reform themselves, or else give us a premission to leave them, divide ourselves from them without incurring the guilt of schism. This is an objection which could not have been urg'd to *St Paul's* arguing, because if ever any communion had an infallibility to secure it from all error, it was certainly that of the Apostles, who spake by inspiration, and were so immediately under the guidance of the Holy Spirit: and I am sorry there can be now such an objection as this made in any part of the Christian Church. But wherever it so happens, we are positively commanded by the Apostle, *to fly idolatry*, and therefore it is their corruption, not our separation, which is the formal cause, and consequently only guilty of the schism. For no Christian can be obliged to communicate with sin, and if an instance of practice upon this general rule of the Apostle may be allowed to be our guide in this case, we have a very considerable, and a very early one from *St Cyprian*, and a Synod of *African* Bishops, which I chuse to mention for the sake of those Christians, whose governours do obstinately retain such gross errors, that they cannot possibly be communicated with,

with, without sacrificing the purity both of their faith and worship. And it is this; In the *Decian* persecution there were two *Spanish* Bishops, *Basilides* and *Martialis*, who to avoid the fury of their persecutors, comply'd with the idolatry of the Heathen, became not only professed idolaters, but one of them an own'd and open blasphemer. But when the heat of the persecution was over, and discipline began once more to take its place in the Church, to secure their preferments as they had formerly done themselves, they seemingly return to the profession of Christianity, and by some art or other insinuating themselves at *Rome*, were by the easiness of Pope *Stephen*, admitted to the communion of that Church; upon which returning they demand their antient sees, and the obedience of their people. But the people of *Leon* and *Astorga*, (for those were their two sees) utterly refuse communion with them, and give this for their reason; that they could not communicate with idolatry and blasphemy; appealing from those unadvised proceedings of Pope *Stephen*, (for *Rome* was at that time neither universal nor infallible) to St *Cyprian*, and a Synod of *African* Fathers, who in a synodical epistle in return of theirs, commend them for refusing communion
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with such Bishops, and end their epistle with this eulogy, *Propter quod integritatis & fidei vestrae religiosam sollicitudinem, fratres dilectissimi, & laudamus pariter & probamus; & quantum possumus adhortamur literis nostris, ne vos cum profanis & maculatis sacerdotibus communicetisne sacrilegâ misceatis, sed integram & sinceram fidei vestrae firmitatem religioso timore servetis.* And thus do we find there may be just cause for dividing of communion without incurring the guilt of schism; but then it must be noted, that this separation must not be built only upon a groundless jealousy, or superstitious fear, but the sin itself must be as evident as is the separation.

This objection therefore being thus removed, St *Paul's* reasoning is very clear, that in a state of separation, nothing can excuse us from the guilt of schism, but only a positive and very evident danger of sin. Wherefore to apply this reasoning of the Apostle to ourselves, it doth, I think, highly concern some persons conscientiously to look into these premises, and seriously consider the danger of this conclusion; such especially I mean, who being convinced by the self-evidence of truth, are forced to confess, that there is not one article of our communion, which
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is in itself positively sinful; for after an impartial view of this argument of the Apostle's, what is there can possibly excuse such a judging, such a censuring, as causeth a division, where there might be an union without sin.

The thirty first canon of the Apostles ordains, that no presbyter, or other clergyman, despising his own Bishop, should set up another altar against him, (which was their charateristick note of schism) for any cause whatever, unless it were either ἀσέβεια ἢ ἀδίκησις, either irreligion or injustice, such faults as he might be condemn'd and deposed for; and that such laymen as adher'd to them in this schism, should be segregated from the communion of the Church: and the same thing is ordained in the thirteenth and fourteenth canons of that Synod of *Constantinople*, which is called the *πρώτη καὶ δευτέρα*, with this further proviso, That tho' the Bishop should be really accus'd, yet were they not (under the same penalties) to withdraw from his communion till he was actually depos'd. Because such a separation as both *Balsamon* and *Zonaros* upon those canons tell us, was look'd upon as an impudent assuming the power of the metropolitan.

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What shall we say then to such as refuse communion with their Bishop, for no other crime but because he is so; were the differences between us no more than what some of them in the popular manage of their schism pretend, scruples and offences for the imposition of some indifferent ceremonies, how far would this be, according to St *Paul's* arguing, from justifying their separation, for *who art thou that judgest?* but yet were this all, there might be some hope of reconciliation, but where no demonstration can convince, no condescension win them, 'tis plain we are not divided about ceremonies only, but 'tis the Hierarchy itself, 'tis the very constitution of our Church must submit to their bold demands, and this is what we know not how to reconcile to our communion; this is what no honest comprehension can admit. Now could any considerations prevail, one would think these of the Apostle so persuasive of unanimity and agreement should, especially at this time when the pressing a firm union is certainly as seasonable, perhaps more necessary, than ever. For 'tis observ'd by *Sozomen* the historian, in the 4th *ch.* of his 6th *lib.* that when *Julian* the apostate proclaimed open war against the cause of Christ, the petty factions and animosities of

of Christianity were laid aside, and all of them joined in one united interest against the common enemy. And there is but one remarkable instance, that I know of, which contradicts this general observation of the historian; to wit, that which St *Austin* hath made concerning the behaviour of the Donatists of *Africk* under that reign (a schism unaccountably implacable to the Church) who would rather venture the common cause of Christianity, than miss the opportunity of striking their own revenge upon the Church, by the malice of an apostate. They flatter'd, petition'd, address'd to this open and avow'd enemy, and had in return of all this, a liberty granted them to open their conventicles, at the same time that the Heathen temples and worship were restored again to the Devils, as St *Austin* severely enough remarks upon them, in his 166th *Ep.* 'Tis true indeed, by the favour of this indulgence they spread their faction, and by the strength they then gain'd, supported themselves under some of the following reigns.

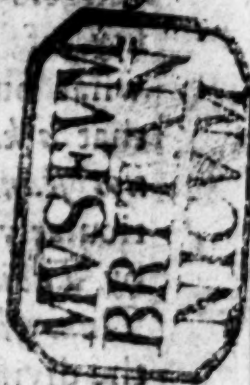
But yet there is such an innate petulance in an overgrown schism, that they could not forbear returning to their old trade, and disturb'd the state as well as the Church; wherefore at length, in the reign
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of *Honorius*, we find that very patent of indulgence granted them by the apostate, was published throughout the whole empire, for the open shaming and exposing of them, and judg'd to be a sufficient ground for that prosecution which finally broke the neck of that schism; I would not be thought either to parallel or apply this further than to convince us of the dangers of separation, and the high necessity of unanimity and agreement: for what our Saviour did in general observe, that *a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand*, hath been long ago more particularly observed of the antient Britons, by *Tacitus* the historian, in *vit. Agrico. Dum singuli pugnant universi vincuntur*, the divisions of our ancestors made way for that conquest, which all the force of *Rome* could never otherwise have compass'd.

And is it not strange that the long experience of Fifteen hundred years and upwards, hath not yet cured us of that fatal distemper, is it not a shame that the venient *Roman* should be a stronger argument to unite the Jews for the destruction of Christ, than it is to us for the support of Christianity. Taught by these examples, let us learn therefore to submit the pride of our hearts to this reasoning

soning of the Apostle's. Let us learn to judge for ourselves only, forbearing to censure others; removing far from us all disgust and dislike to our spiritual guides, which proceed usually from a peevish scrupulosity, and are the first motives to an unreasonable division from them. Let us learn to hold *the unity of the faith, in the bond of peace*, let us all say the same thing, and let there be no schisms among us.

F I N I S



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